

THE LYRIC MUSE
REVIVED IN EUROPE
OR A CRITICAL DISPLAY
OF THE OPERA IN ALL
ITS REVOLUTIONS.

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THE LYRIC MUSE

REVIVED IN BURGH

OR A CRITICAL DEBATE

OF THE



ITS

LONDON PRINTED FOR J. DAVIS AND
C. BENTLEY MOOREHEAD

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PREFACE

The following sheets owe their birth to count Algarotti's celebrated Essay on the Opera, to which they may be considered as a very proper supplement. The attempt of that ingenious writer was to restore to the Opera its pristine dignity and estimation, by regulating its several constituent parts, viz. the poetry, music, dancing, scenery, and even the structure of the theatre: the business of the Editor has been to select, from the best writers, whatever tended to an historical and critical elucidation of the Opera, both in Italy and England, from its origin to the present time. Count Algarotti's Essay and the present volume may be considered, therefore, as a sort of abridged library; presenting to the reader, in one view, an ab-

fract of every thing worth his attention that has been published on the subject.

It may be proper to observe, that although to the word *Lyric*, in general, be annexed the idea of what we commonly call *Odes*; in strict propriety it is otherwise, as will be found by a just and critical investigation; for amongst the ancients, whether Greeks or Romans, the *tragic muse* was unquestionably revered as the supreme of the lyric tribe; and for this very obvious reason, that in her choruses were introduced odes of every denomination and complexion; nay, the recital and gestures of the several performers were not only under the controul of, but also guided by, musical numbers for the more happy and accurate expression of affecting sentiments, energetic dialogue, and animating passion.

The essays contained in this volume may serve to prove that this excellence of the primitive dramatic art, which had been destroyed by barbarous irruptions, from the north, into the Roman empire, has been re-

vived in what we call modern Europe, under the title of the *Opera*.

Investigators of the musical art will, from hence also be informed, how considerably both dramatic authors and composers have been indebted to the venerable simplicity and innate solemn grace of church music; and that the closer they have kept to this, the more they were sure to please, by affecting the heart, and stirring up the passions. When they departed from so laudable a practice to hunt after the difficulties of their art, and to affect surprize, from that period of idle labour and perplexing affectation, the ear alone paid homage: the heart disclaimed their empire.

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THE LYRIC MUSE REVIVED IN EUROPE.

C H A P. I.

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE OPERA; OR REVIVAL OF THE LYRIC MUSE IN EUROPE.

The Italian Opera derives its birth from a sacred drama, entitled *Conversione di S. Paolo*, set to music by Beverini, a most celebrated composer at the time of the carnival in the year 1480. It was exhibited at Rome, in a moveable theatre, made at the express command of cardinal Riario, nephew of pope Sixtus the fourth. Sulpizio makes mention of it, in his dedicatory epistle to the same cardinal, which he prefixed to his notes upon Vitruvius *. The fame of so delightful

* This, and the two following chapters, are taken from the Italian letters of the ingenious signor Martinelli.

and entertaining a spectacle being spread abroad, the Venetians came to a resolution of having the like at their carnivals, which they carried into execution five years after, in 1485.

The subject the Venetians made choice of was also taken from the Conversion of St. Paul, and called, *La Verita Raminga*, "Truth Errant, or Truth a Pilgrim." It was mixed with a deal of droll humour. Truth discovers herself to lawyers, physicians, apothecaries, and to the ladies; but is shunned by all as an improper acquaintance for them. Among the rest a whimsical character is introduced, who wants to dispose of his conscience, as by no means a marketable commodity, and of but very little use in trade.

The dramatic Muse, seeing Truth deserted by every one, at length compassionates the case, and assents to her making one in her representations, so that she have no objection to abate of her severity, and conform herself to their intention, as well as to have her person set off in a pleasing manner. She

accedes; consequently having entirely changed her dress, gestures and manner, a groupe of comic characters unites to join with them in a dance, which she complies with*.

This exhibition received so amazing an applause, that it gave rise to all the other entertainments of the same kind, which are annually represented in the carnival-season at Venice. That city has continued, ever since, to be the general rendezvous of pleasure for such foreigners, whose easy fortunes assign over to them the entire disposal of their time and persons. From Venice, that species of dramatic spectacle has been introduced at, and patronized by, the most respectable courts of Europe. In Rome was also adopted the institution of these musical representations, where they gradually arose to that point of magnificence, which they now display.

The style of the music, to which those first dramas had been performed, was not at all different from that made use of in the same

* See Mr. Derrick's Letters for a farther account of this exhibition.

age, in divine service ; by which it is very plain, the composition was no better than what we call *canto fermo*. The reason why the church-music style, so plain, yet solemn, continued for such a number of years on the stage, I think may be deduced from two causes ; the one is, the religious and grave subjects given to the masters to compose on ; the other, the exclusion of women at Rome ; whose voices, having more agility and acuteness, were consequently better adapted for the chromatic, that is, to run into more refined divisions, and to display a more surprising variety, by gliding with greater rapidity, as well as with much more ease, from the lowest to the highest note, of which those called tenor, baritone, or bass voices are not capable. Here none of the female sex have ever been allowed to sing since the establishment of operas ; for which reason we see employed in their stead young men of a delicate complexion, and effeminate tone of voice, until such time as they are rendered unfit by a growing beard. *Castrati*

are likewise made use of for the same reason, because, even to their most advanced age, they continue to resemble women, both in complexion and voice.

It is not improper to observe here, that the antient Romans employed such in their theatrical exhibitions, and called them *spadones*, or *eunuchi*; words equivalent to what we mean by *castrato*, which was made use of by the old Romans in a more extensive sense than we now understand it.

Juvenal, that spirited and daring censor of the corruption of the age in which he lived, sets out in the beginning of his first satire, by pointing at a favourite vice, then introduced among the Roman ladies of marrying those degraded persons;

Cum tenor uxorem ducat spado.

When the soft eunuch takes to him a wife.

And, in the sixth satyr of his second book, he lays the lash on with greater severity, in order to inflict condign punishment on so flagrant a crime, that was then become

fashionable. Fired with virtuous indignation, he exclaims,

*Sunt quas eunuchi imbelles, ac mollia semper
Oscula delectent, & desperatio barbæ
Et quod abortivo non est opus. —*

“The favourite objects of some ladies affections are effeminate eunuchs: they rapturously cling to kisses from unbearded lips, and whence no cause for abortive drugs may arise.” Alluding, in the last verse, to their impious and unnatural abhorrence of child-bearing; as it was then a common practice among them, to take medicines in order to prevent their becoming mothers.

But when the christian religion was established, it not only suppressed, by its canons, this shameful abuse of matrimony, but also prohibited the act of castration, unless through a medical necessity. However, singing was in such estimation, and the pecuniary rewards, as well as other high favours, conferred on several Soprani and Contralti, were so extravagant, that they

but too frequently tempted avaritious parents to elude the inhibition under some false pretext or other; and particularly in Apulia: which country has furnished so many eminent singers, viz. Farinelli, Caffarelli, and a number besides, each deserving to be styled the Orpheus of Italian music.

The first of the natives of Apulia, who made a fortune by the means of his vocal excellence, was Visconti. He became so great a favourite of the emperor Leopold, as to obtain from him the title of baron. His family now subsist in a very respectable situation in the city of Bitonto, his native place.

A laundress, excited by the wealth and dignity which Visconti had acquired, on a feigned pretext of medical necessity, had a young son of hers, called Matteo, in the Neapolitan dialect Matteucci, castrated, who afterwards, by his astonishing power of voice, and most agreeable manner of singing, insinuated himself so well into the good graces of Charles the second, king of Spain, and of his queen, as to acquire a very considerable

fortune, besides being honoured with the title of marquis.

The first drama, bearing any resemblance to the musical performances now exhibited on our theatres, and which has nothing in it either of sacred or buffoon, was a pastoral piece, called *Daphne*, composed above an hundred and sixty years ago, by Octavio Rinuccini.

Vocal music being transferred from the church to the stage, the masters were obliged to compose suitably, on account of the more gay subjects, which the latter delighted in, as well as on account of the voices of the castrati, and of the women; to the delicacy and agility of which they were obliged to conform themselves. Hence the stage singing deviated in a short time from its native simplicity, its majestic and devotional complexion, into studied airs of affectation; always varying, never steady; sprightly, yet complicated; by which means the vocal faculties had their boundaries enlarged, and were allowed a much wider range to expatiate in.

However, the transition was neither immediate nor violent, if compared to the indulgences now in vogue, which were established but by degrees, and at successive distances of time; for, even at the beginning of the present century, dramatic vocal exertion retained a good deal of that natural simplicity, consistence, and regularity, which it had reserved to itself on separating from that of the church; and, as a proof, the singing actor Siface, and the actress La Tilla, both natives of Tuscany, were then esteemed to be the two foremost in their profession, and as it were its Herculean pillars, on account of their having fixed the epocha of correct, chaste and regular singing. In this school were also trained La Santa Stella, La Reggiana, Nicolini, and Senesino.

The leading alterer of the Italian music was Pistocco Bolognese. He at first was a singer on the stage; but being advised, on account of his bad voice and disagreeable figure, to quit it, he became a priest; and betook himself to teach an art, which he could not practice

with any advantage to himself. His most celebrated scholars were Bernacchi and Pasi, both natives of Bologna, consequently his countrymen.

Bernacchi became a most skilful proficient in the art, but he erred in perpetual efforts of pressing into and running over, in the small compass of one air, all the vocal exertions possible, and sometimes too without the least regard to any relationship between those Pindaric wandering flights and the passion to be represented. Such faulty attempts at stretching beyond what others could do, joined to a disagreeable figure, and a not alluring voice, prevented his being in favour with true connoisseurs, however he might be extolled by a few enthusiastic admirers of difficult execution.

Pasi, his fellow disciple, on the contrary, took no farther instructions from his master than were necessary to exhibit, to the greatest advantage, his small, but most exquisite pipe, added to an amiable low stature, that, for neatness and beauty, painting

could not surpass. Of so captivating a nature proved his excellence, that he was pronounced to be the most elegant and correct vocal performer that had ever graced the stage.

Paita was a cotemporary of Bernacchi, and though but a tenor, with a very unhappy voice too, yet would he most violently strain to exceed even Bernacchi in the same style of singing. Two famous female singers, La Cuzzoni and La Faustina, were likewise cotemporary with Bernacchi.

Cuzzoni's voice had but a few notes, all equally sweet, yet sonorous. In her polished and correct manner of performing, she greatly resembled Pasi; and deserved to be called (without exaggeration) the golden lyre of Italian music.

Faustina was blest with a voice brilliant in every note, high or low, and endowed with an unexampled rapidity. She was revered as a vocal phenomenon, and hailed by all as a new muse. Such wonders were related of her transcendant performance, that the gouty, and confined to their beds, yielded to

the strong temptation of being carried to hear her. Medals were struck for her in Florence, and in every place whither she repaired new honours, and still encreasing applause were conferred upon her, until such time as, by marrying signor Adolpho Haffe, at Dresden, she retired from the profession of a stage-singer. In that city she and her husband now reside, and enjoy an annual stipend from the Saxon court.

Bernacchi's complicated and over-strained manner of singing, being copied by all the young performers, gifted with a strength of voice equal to his, and to such difficult execution, laid the composers under a necessity of complying with their inclinations. Thus music, from being a neat and simple shepherdess, or at least from being a graceful and respectable matron, in which appearance she had delighted to display herself till then, was all on the sudden debauched into a capricious, whimsical and disorderly courtesan, exciting ideas of so perplexed, equivocal and intricate a nature, that an audience, consisting of per-

sons of the most refined taste, could not in the least explain, or even comprehend what their meaning could be.

The striking brilliancy, and wonderful power of Faustina's voice, gave rise to a third style in musical composition. Her novel and admirable manner of singing was become so prevalent and fashionable, that men and women, however disqualified from attaining to her extraordinary manner of excelling, were seized with a general phrenzy of aping her. And, oh force of human stupidity! few or none applied themselves to imitate the manner of Cuzzoni, or of Pasi, and for the very reason which should have invited them, because that was more natural and much easier to be imitated.

In the heat of this musical revolution started up Farinelli, with a voice proportioned to his demi-gigantic figure, enriched with seven or eight notes above what the Soprani are in general possessed of, yet were they all sonorous, clear, and pleasing to the ear in the highest degree. He had moreover care-

fully treasured up in his mind all the musical knowledge communicated to him by that most excellent master Porpora, who had the care of his instruction. This extraordinary Being, executed with the greatest ease and freedom, all those difficulties, in attempting which, Bernacchi used to torture himself so ineffectually. He immediately became the idol of the Italians, as he hath since been of all harmonic connoisseurs.

This miracle of nature and of art, has been the cause of much labour and trouble to the musical tribe; because, the singers, composers, and instrumentalists, as if fascinated by the same magic charm, would thence forwards, at all events, ape Farinelli's manner; and so far has the contagion since been spread, that nature and propriety seem to be entirely forgotten; insomuch, that one hardly hears any thing from singers or instrumentalists, but disgustful efforts to execute difficulties beyond their power.

The few that have been greatly served, instead of being hurt in the least by an imitation

of Farinelli's Pindaric flights, were, Salimbeni, lately deceased, Caffarello and Mingotti, all pupils of Porpora. To that great master are we indebted, for having introduced into music the propriety, delicacy and energy, with which those admirable performers could express the passions, and sing to the heart. Whereas, on the contrary, all whimsical, high-strained and unmeaning efforts, deserve no better a compliment, than that of singing to the ear only; because they are more calculated to extort admiration from the foolish and ignorant, than to win the applause of judicious hearers: they are, in comparison with the others, to be considered in a not more flattering light, than is rope-dancing with the graceful and elegant movements of a minuet.

If, however, those very elegant performers above-mentioned, have sometimes indulged themselves, by their trillings, shakes and cadences, to soar above the clouds, as the term is, that ought to be imputed to the bad taste so generally prevailing, which made them apprehend that their superior excellence might

be doubted of, and nibbled at by cavillers, if they were not now and then to give specimens of their capacity for such difficult execution; which, in the soundness of their own judgment, they always blamed, when in conversation with persons of true taste.

C H A P. II.

ON THE POWER OF MUSIC.

Among all the arts distinguished by the epithet liberal, there is not one endowed with such an assuasive and delightful power as is music in general; because, she has the peculiar faculty of adapting herself to the several modes of expression practised by the various ranks in life. Such is the inherent excellence of this art, that those nations where she is cultivated, are, by pre-eminence, called the polite and civilized; while those, on the contrary, that are either ignorant or contemners of her pleasing sway, stand justly branded with the odious appellation of barbarians.

Such a distinction is founded upon the solid basis of reason; because, in whatever realm music has arrived to a state of perfection, there poetry also must keep an equal pace; and because in fact, from the former is derived

the latter. Nor can poetry, if exalted to a state of perfection, be found in any society, but where all the fine arts flourish together ; for to her divine flame, they administer nutriment and fuel.

Hence obviously appear the motives which induced certain philosophers, when defining the power of music, to assign to her such a brilliant prerogative, and that, without paying any attention to a mere arithmetical combination of notes, which, simply as such, and unaccompanied with the inspiring and life-giving impulse of poetry, can never produce any other effect but a capricious jingling, and unmeaning collision of sounds.

Poetry rises upon two principal supporters, viz. first, the sentiments or passions that are supplied by the subject ; and secondly, the metre or measure, in which consist the movements of regular versification. The musical professor, animates his composition with the enkindling spirit which he derives from the poetic muse, and consequently makes his mo-

dulation to move attendance to her leading numbers.

Those celebrated musical professors, of whom such pompous accounts have been transmitted to us, to wit, Mercury, Apollo, Orpheus, Pythagoras, furnished the most powerful medicine, through the conveyance of their soothing songs, to subdue the ferocity of those savage, uncultivated people, fabulously represented by the poets under the forms of wild beasts and trees, as Horace understood the matter, and elegantly displayed those Parnassian allegories; justly concluding, that such or the like effects could not fail being produced when philosophers, poets, musical composers, great instrumental as well as vocal performers were coexistent; that is, in short, when from a concurrence of finished parts, this art was shewn in a true state of perfection.

So much for Antiquity. Let us give two instances among the moderns, of the power of music. A famous performer on the fiddle, born at Naples, and named Stradella, playing at a church in Venice, so far captivated the

heart of a very beautiful young woman, then under the amorous protection of a gentleman, that he soon became master of her person, and carried her off to Rome. The gentleman, enraged at such treatment, and violently determined on revenge, employed a wretch to set off in immediate pursuit, to assassinate him.

The bravo, being arrived at Rome, learned that Stradella was to perform at a certain church, on a certain day; which being come, the commissioned ruffian took his station, to perpetrate the horrid deed; but on hearing Stradella play, he found his savage temper so melted by the sweet sounds of the fiddle, that compassion triumphed, and he could not murder so excellent an artist; nay more, he communicated to him a private information of the bloody intention he had come upon, and wrote at the same time to his employer at Venice, that Stradella was gone from Rome before his arrival there.

A second instance of the wonderful power of music, in our modern world, we owe to

Signor Filippo Palma, born also at Naples, well known in London among the people of fashion, and musical connoisseurs. Being surprized in his house by a creditor, determined on his arrestment, Palma, without making any reply to the several reproachful invectives and angry menaces, which the other threw out against him, but by playing one arietta, then another, still sitting at his harp-ficord, not only calmed the fury of his creditor, but obtained his forgiving him the debt; and what is still more surprizing, obtained from him, either as a loan or a gift, ten guineas more, to extricate him from another difficulty he was then embarrassed with*.

The energetic influence of all those faculties combined, which ought to be justly felt by a musical composer, must not be less so by

* Stradella's fiddle making an employed murderer to relent, is equal to the fabulous boast of taming tygers, &c. and Palma's fine accompaniment of his voice, though far from being an exquisite one, operating in such a manner on the feeling of a surly creditor, is no way inferiour to Orpheus's obtaining the return of his wife Euridice from Pluto; but perhaps, all things duly considered, a greater prodigy.

the performer, for if on one hand, the composer has the poetical text of his author to model his notes upon, so on the other, is the performer in a progressive manner, to mould his execution jointly upon the diction of the former, and the musical composition of the latter : hence consequently, the more is incumbent on him should it so happen, that the composer possess not the art of entering into the spirit of the passions upon which he is employed to write. For without a compleat mastery in expressing them all, music put together by such an artist will never fail to prove insufficient, incongruous, and defective, which is a truth that requires no sublime calculation, nor any great effort of the human genius to demonstrate.

The fate of the Opera during forty years past hath been very hard ; and that arose from the subjects being written in the lowest style of poetry : which fault has been indeed meliorated by Apostolo Zeno, so far as relates to a decent regard for common sense, an observance of the costume, and a proper planning

of the subject. But since him, the dignity of Operas hath been raised to as high a pitch of perfection as it is possible for such productions to attain by that superior genius Metastasio. For in truth from the copious fountain of judicious elegance, and tasteful imagery springing from the pen of this accomplished bard, those great musical composers Porpora, Leo, Vinci, Pergolesi, Haffi, and others, seized as with an emulous contagion, and a kind of heaven-born enthusiasm, have derived the greatest part of those musical beauties that render their works invaluable.

Pursuant to this uncontrovertible truth, that where there is no poetry, there can be no music, or at least no good music, it would be necessary, that not only the musical composer, but also the performers were properly rudimented in polite literature; and altho' they might not become poets in consequence, yet they would thence be better qualified to relish the various charms of so pleasing an art.

Then might we have just reason to hope that music would not only be restored to her

native dignity, but would even extend her triumphs farther than she has hitherto been known to do. Another advantage would accrue from the cultivating such a method; which is, the musical tribe being thereby less ignorant, would also be less arrogant, and would not with the same pert alacrity, and smirking forwardness, erect themselves into so many mistaken aristarchi, although still equally erroneous either in praising or censuring whatever comes before them.

Then would they with a becoming modesty be made to comprehend that the public is the supreme and only tribunal, by which their merit is to be appreciated; because, in the first place, all spectacles and theatrical exhibitions whatsoever have been instituted for the entertainment of the public; and secondly, because it is the public that pays them, which however ignorant it may be deemed in the aggregate, so far as concerns the nicer mechanical differences of art; yet has it always an internal sensibility of the force in any departments producing an effect, and persuasively

insinuating itself for popular approbation ; and from an instinctive conviction never fails determining the prize to those who truly deserve it.

In fine, that artist who knows not the secret of pleasing the public, can never be esteemed as a musical genius. If such a regulation as here hinted at were established, we should not so often hear in contradiction to a doctrine founded on the true rationale of common sense, this impertinent answer. "What does the public know of music, that it should arrogate to itself a right of deciding thereon?"

By means of the voice, mankind in general express their passions, which are but rarely pushed to the last extreme ; yet when that happens to be the case, they do not last long ; because human nature can bear them but to a certain pitch, and for a certain limited time, beyond which either the passion subsides, or the person so actuated expires.

Were musical composers to have this truth always present in their mind, when they meet

in a poem the excess of some passion depicted, they would then but transiently describe, and not prolixly dwell upon it. The other passages which do not indicate the extreme of any passion, are to be uttered in those middle tones, analagous to such as are made use of in usual conversation, in order that the lungs may not be too much fatigued and unnecessarily, since conformably to their movements musical numbers have been made to keep time, and thence borrow their gradations, by the most intelligent masters of the art.

How wild and defultory is the manner of running as it were, from pole to pole thro' all the excessive difficulties of notes practicable in music, with which Opera-airs are now so often disfigured! and for what? To accompany the words of a dying person in those affecting moments, when the lungs are about drawing their last breath. Is not this an error equally shocking as ridiculous? yet strange to think such unartful and (what it may be justly called) so wild a chace, after the capricious and difficult in execution, is by some

cried up for a superior knowledge and pre-eminence in music. But how grossly ignorant must such admirers be! since the only and true great difficulty of art consists in imitating nature, with ease and grace, in such a manner too, that an audience forgets the performance is a deceptive imitation.

This doctrine was thoroughly understood by Bononcini, as well as by Handel and Geminiani, to which great masters England is much indebted for her adopting that refinement of taste, and knowledge, to justly appreciate the beautiful and sublime of every polite art, and of music especially.

But the universal corruption and rapid degeneracy of the last, has in a great measure, been owing to the composers having been under the disagreeable necessity of yielding up a great part of their authority and directorship, to the whimsical turn of performers, whose mistaken vanity in their exhibitions would idly imitate the singing of birds, and strain their absurd ambition to other vain attempts, as if they intended to delineate with an

unnatural mixture of notes, the grotesque variety of an harlequin's coat. It being then, as above observed, the hard fate of composers to be under the necessity of complying with the unaccountable capriciousness of performers; may we not assign it as one of the principal causes of degenerated music.

Although every body, the least initiated, knows, that the primary object of each musical instrument is to imitate the human voice, yet these self-erected tyrants of nature, have not only profaned, but perverted this intent so audaciously, as to degrade the human voice very often to the subservient artistry of imitating at one time a flute, at another a violin; and if things are suffered to be carried on in this preposterous manner, there is no doubt, but we shall hear it made to attempt an emulation of the drum or French horn; whenever such an odd conceit shall hitch in with the fancy of one of those bold deserters from nature, who rather than go right with others, chuse so surprizingly to deviate by themselves into error.

But that all the blame may not be laid to the charge of the performers, the composers too, have figured in for their share of criminality in effectuating the entire fallen state of music, by the means too of a new fashioned invention, which in absurdity, does not yield to any of the above-named faults, and that is a transposing the poetical diction submitted to their composition; which they do, by altering the arrangement of the authors' words according to their will and pleasure, by absolutely confounding the measure as well as verse, and by totally destroying the sense. Another innovation of theirs to disfigure a poet's song is to thrust in here, and there, the expletives *fi* and *no*, which by vilely eking out, are to the full as injurious to, poetic harmony, as their impertinent transposition. Nor are these dislocators satisfied that their cruelty should stop there; no—to put a finishing hand to the degeneracy of operatical exhibitions, they first compose the music for an air, and then send it with their imperious commands, to some poor hackney devil of an Italian poet to adapt, or rather

torture words to it, in the best manner he can.

On reflecting a little, we shall find that the reason why the most beautiful articles of musical execution (here it is to be understood relatively to those airs, that seem now to be the chief object of the singing art) are rendered so often disgusting to an audience. The fault resides in those symphonies that persecute the performer from the commencement to the end of a song; they being too prolix, too much furcharged with repetition, with forced-in cadenzas, wherein the performer fails not to display at once all the musical powers he is master of.

Until Pistocco's time when a performer sang, the instrumentalists were silent, and when the former stopped, either to repeat, or to make a transition to the second part, then the instrumental symphony judiciously intervened, with a due and appropriated harmony, not repeating (as now is the practice) note after note, what the vocal musician had sung; no, it was quite unincumbered with that

crowd of unisons and octaves, as employed by the composers from Pollari, the original inventor of them, down to our time.

Singers ought never to be unmindful, that cadenzas are nothing more than an epilogue made up of the most striking and admired passages in an air, which therefore they should make use of in a very sparing manner, and not wantonly stray to the uttering of notes, calculated to express the rejoicings of an hymeneal song, although the air they are performing treats of despair and death.

That preluding symphony to a piece called its overture, is not so scrupulously attended to by composers as it ought, in order not to trespass against the dictates of taste. As the matter is now commonly handled, it might often be prefixed equally well to another subject. Let the tasteful artists, however, remember for what purpose it had been instituted, viz. to prepare the ears and eyes of an audience for hearing and seeing the representation of a subject, whether warlike, festive, pastoral, or bearing any other complexion,

and to be executed in such a manner as that it could not be misconstrued to any other purpose, than that for which it was intended.

The last thing now that remains to be treated of, is a *Pasticio* ! What a wretched gallimaufry, what a monstrous combination is a *Pasticio* ! How indeed can it possibly prove otherwise, it being the result of such heterogeneous ingredients ; the same as for instance, would be an obtrusion of airs, either in the Gothic or Chinese taste, on a subject and scenes taken from the Grecian history.

The singing tribe have strangely perverted the word taste down to their mistaken notions. The true meaning of which to them should signify—to be so strongly penetrated with the passion they are to express, as to be thence certainly enabled to affect a sympathizing audience.—In a like manner, he who in common discourse delivers himself with a dignity and ease adapted to his subject, is said to be a judicious and elegant speaker.

The general complaint made against the arrogance of singers, might by whosoever

would undertake to plead their cause, be converted into compassion for them through charitably ascribing all their saucy airs to the force of custom.—By their profession they are obliged to imagine themselves, sometimes a Cæsar, a Pyrrhus, an Hannibal.—Now considering the lowness of their origin in general, it requires no small efforts to represent adequately, such celebrated heros, on a stage where they are to figure in magnificent, or imperial robes, with courtiers, ready to obey their nods, and execute whatever they command. For about three hours this musical hero is to himself the imaginary sovereign of the universe: where is the real prince that stalks in the solemn robes of imperial sway three hours at a time for the greater part of the year?—Hence will their adventitious arrogance be thought more mildly of by those who may be pleased to allow this apology.

C H A P. III.

ON INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC.

The instrumental as well as the vocal performers ought to be guided by one and the same right reason of things. An imitation therefore of the various powers of the human voice, should be the only object of musical instruments. Some, indeed, take in all, such are the organ, the harp, the fiddle; because, they can imitate the voices of every age, while others are confined to an imitation only of particular voices.

The province of some instruments, is to express the tender sentiments of love, or elegiac strains; such, for instance, is the flute. Others, with a dancing sprightliness, as it were, represent the joyous sensations of younger years, for which purpose are admirably well adapted the guitar, the mandoline,

and the psalterion. Some are appropriated to the chace, and every kind of rural diversion, such are the French horn and the hautbois; which moreover, by a combining the representations of hunting, in as analogous a manner as possible, with the rejoicings of war, have been made to accede to the drum and tympanum, two instruments originally invented for military music.

The organ has ever preserved an unrivalled empire in religious rites, and all church solemnities.

The fiddle reigns a sovereign uncontrouled, as well in theatres, as in all other (which the devout call) profane entertainments. Corelli was the Apollo of the fiddle, and by his divine compositions, has given immortality to the united powers of harmony and melody. The more his works are heard, the more this truth will be felt, by the resistless, yet pleasing power, which they usurp over the enchanted faculties of all who listen to them. Were we to investigate whence arose this magic sway annexed to Corelli's productions, we should soon

discover, that the whole secret consists in his having imitated whatever is most charming and delightful in the human voice ; and his having, with musical sounds, expressed the passions in the same manner as would a concert of human voices, each according to its respective faculty, when guided by the strictest rules of art.

The powers of the human voice, are measured proportionably to the several stages of life. Its first notification is at our birth, and being uttered at the unfolding of the vocal organization, it sounds harsh and disagreeable to ears accustomed to hear riper accents mellowed by years, and kept within just boundaries not to prove offensive.

In proportion as the organs disentangle themselves, the voice loses by degrees of its original harshness ; and the child, in time, becomes capable of delivering tones that do not shock a delicate ear ; for tho' he may yet retain some vestige of a grating discordance, yet, when he strains not his voice, he is not only endured, but heard with affection and

tenderness, on account of a winning softness in his tones.

About the age of twelve or thirteen, when the young plant approaches to the time of becoming prolific, especially in Italy, then the voice soars to the soprano, or for the most part to a tolerable, at least, if not a perfect contralto; and that observation gave rise to the practice of castrating.

From fifteen to eighteen, the voice is in its full bloom and vigour; because, the lungs continue expanding themselves, and acquiring a greater force, until the age of twenty-five, which is the last period of growing. At that time, every organ has attained to its state of maturity, and corporeal perfection, in which it continues till about forty, respectively to eunuchs, few of whom shine after that age, but most commonly find their faculties decline until death close the scene.

The business of all musical instruments, is to imitate the human voice, and express the passions. A judicious player, always chuses the tones that affect his hearers in the most

pleasing manner. The stridulous and disgustful accents of infant years, are to be avoided by all means, because children, by their cries, seem to intimate those painful sensations, which they are so frequently liable to, whether through violent impressions of the air, or any other accident. If, in particular, performers on the fiddle would keep this consideration in view, then should we not have such frequent occasion of reproaching them with continually introducing overstrained tones, for the sake of their unmeaning bravuras. The youthful season of life, is the best adapted to joyful execution, that is, a moderate soprano and contralto, and also to love-pieces, which likewise admit of the tenor, but with more moderation.

A serious dialogue, is commonly carried on by grown up people, which may be rendered with propriety by the tenor, the basse, &c. But if in a concert, all sorts of voices were to be introduced as in a dialogue of many, let the sharps, that represent the youngest voices, be heard but seldom; inasmuch, as they are proxies

for persons, who, thro' the modesty of their years, are to speak but seldom. This doctrine Corelli adhered to (more than any other professor) in his compositions, by employing, most frequently, the *voci di mezzo* ; for which reason, he made use of the *basse*, as the regulator of his harmony, or musical discourse.

Although the most intelligent masters recommend Corelli to their scholars, as a model for the art of imitating nature, yet, as soon as they think themselves capable of composing, they quit the golden middle-way of Corelli, and prostitute themselves, not only to the executing of most childish and ridiculous sharps on their instruments; but declining all imitations of the human voice, apply themselves to represent that of birds, dogs, and other beasts, which their mistaken vanity calls *bravura*.

The Apollo of this *bravura*-style was Ferrari, undoubtedly a very great performer, who, having a just and proper esteem for Geminiani, was desirous, above all things, to be heard by him, which was soon brought

about. Ferrari having played a favourite piece, asked him, if it was agreeable to his taste; who candidly replied, your execution, sir, on the fiddle, I must own, is exceedingly great; but you have not in the least affected me: my ears were entertained, but my heart was at rest.

To many wonder-exciting performers, may not the same judicious reproach be applied? For as action is the life of oratory, so, to move the passions should be the very soul of music; and this great truth, all musical composers and performers should never lose sight of, but keep constantly before their eyes, as a perpetual monitor, not to deviate from the matron-chastity of nature, into the uninteresting tricks, and harlot-inveiglings of affectation, that declared foe to all the dictates of genuine art.

C H A P. IV.

ON THE UNITED POWERS OF POETRY
AND MUSIC.

It may not be amiss to determine whether by the combination of so many enrapturing arts, the Opera be not calculated to enfeeble young minds, and prepare them to become willing profelytes to the seductive charms of vice, rather than to make them zealous adherents to the more rigid paths of virtue. This topic has been long agitated, and various opinions are delivered on either side of the question, sometimes to a degree of acrimony. Let us take the sentiments of a celebrated jesuit and professor of eloquence *, ranked among the most eminent, his order could ever boast of in that department.

* Porée in his admirable oration, entitled *THEATRUM sine vel esse possit SCHOLA informandis moribus idonea.*

“ Can the stage be rendered an useful school for the forming of manners.” It was published in London in 1735.

“No doubt, says he, but you may be desirous to learn the notion which I have formed to myself, of this lately revived species of the drama, called the Lyric. Let me be then indulged, ere I venture an answer, to enquire what may be your sense of the united powers of music and poetry. Do ye harbour any notion that they are prejudicial in themselves? That surely cannot be, since it may be uncontrovertibly asserted that if they have been sometimes impeachable for either enervating, or debauching; they have been at other times highly praise-worthy, for not only exalting and improving the human mind, but lifting our nature to higher degrees of virtue than commonly experienced. On the adverse side, in what estimation is the dancing art, a distinguished auxiliary in Operas? Do you protest against it, would you absolutely proscribe it? No, surely. That would favour too much of barbarism; because dancing unfolds to us all the graceful and enchanting movements the human frame is capable of, whether exerted in the nimble

and cadenced movements of the feet, the attractive display of the arms, or in the gently pleasing as well as animated sway of the whole form ; provided that no action, or gesture tend to excite voluptuous ideas.

“ Your looks I see declare that when the dancing art is kept under such restriction, you are not absolutely averse to an exertion of its powers.—That granted ; let me put this other question ; may not the renowned acts of heroes be celebrated in verse, and receive a still greater heightening from the additional charms of harmony ? That is allowed too. I congratulate with ye, and encouraged by such a concession, proceed to one point more, and that is to ask, whether the recital of heroic virtues, with the farther enlivening accompaniment of musical numbers, are not most capable of pleasing the ear, of arousing the soul, and inspiring a glorious thirst of praise, when springing from virtuous deeds. This question also being acceded to by your obliging suffrages, and from which none but deaf, or stupid mortals

can dissent ; I shall not trouble ye with any other enquiries, but with an ingenuous candour declare my sentiment, which I trust you will not hesitate to adopt, viz. “ The improvement of our manners may be effectuated by the operatical productions of the lyric muse kept under due regulations.”—For instance, when a choice is made of some glorious and suitable action, let the poet’s verses flowing with ease, be at the same time fraught with noble sentiments ; let the musical composition be nervous and truly expressive of the passions assigned to it. Let the dances introduced be elegant, chaste, have a meaning relative to, and arising from the subject of the poem ; by which means they will deliver a kind of silent poetry to the spectators, by the gracefulness, regularity, and ease of their varied movements. Who now can doubt, that an opera, when thus conducted, may not be sublimed into virtue’s favourite school.”

C H A P. V.

AN INVESTIGATION OF OPERAS. *

To the doctrine of the two preceding authors, cannot be added a more apposite chapter than the following; which beams a new light on count Algarotti's sentiments on the subject of Operas.

“ The state of the opera deserves a particular elucidation : and to this end we must endeavour to trace it to its origin, which lies in a great measure hid in darkness. Riccoboni † is of opinion, that the first ever represented, was that which the doge and senate of Venice, exhibited for the entertainment of Henry the third of France, in the year 1574. But this account is by no means satisfactory : for Sulpitius, an Italian, speaks of the musical drama; as an entertainment known in Italy in the year 1490 ‡.

* From Dr. Brown.

† Theatre, &c.

‡ Menetrier des representations en musique.

History traces the rise of Opera no farther : but a circumstance mentioned by Sulpitius, who was a man of letters, may seem to lead us up to its true origin. He is by some supposed to have been the inventor of this musical drama ; but he ingenuously tells us that he only revived it.

We have seen above, that the tragedy of the ancient Greeks was accompanied with music ; that the same union was borrowed, and maintained thro' the several provinces of the Roman empire. If therefore, we suppose, what is, altogether probable, that the form of the antient tragedy had been still kept up in some retired part of Italy, which the barbarians never conquered ; we then obtain a fair account of the rise of the modern Opera, which hath so much confounded all enquiry.

As Venice was the place where the Opera first appeared in splendor, so it is highly probable, that there the antient Tragedy, had slept in obscurity during the darkness of the barbarous ages. For while the rest of Italy

was over-run by the nations from the north ; the seas and morasses of Venice preserved her alone from their incursions : hence history tells us people flocked to Venice from every part of Italy : hence the very form of her Republic had been maintained for thirteen hundred years ; and from these views of security, it was natural for the helpless arts, to seek an asylum within her canals, from the fury and ignorance of a barbarous conqueror.

Other circumstances concur to strengthen this opinion. The carnival first appeared in splendour, and still wears it at Venice, beyond every other part of Italy. Now the carnival is, in many circumstances, almost a transcript of the ancient Saturnalia of Rome.

In the Venetian comedy the actor wears a masque ; a palpable imitation, or rather continuation of the old Roman custom.

That the modern Opera is no more than a revival of the old Roman tragedy, and not a new invented species will appear still more evident, if we consider, that it is an exhibition altogether out of the nature, and repugnant

to the universal genius of modern customs and manners.

We have seen the natural union of poetry and music, as they rise in the savage state; and how this union forms the tragic species in the natural progression of things. Hence we have deduced the musical tragedies of ancient Greece: but in ancient Rome, it appears they arose merely from imitation, and adoption. Nor could it be otherwise, because the Romans wanted the first seeds or principles, from whence the musical tragedies of the Greeks arose.

The same reasoning takes place with respect to the modern Opera. It emerged at a time when the general state of manners in Europe could not naturally produce it. It emerged in that very city, where most probably it must have been hid: in a city whose other entertainments are most evidently borrowed from those of ancient Rome. And if to those arguments, we add this farther consideration, that the subjects of the very first Operas were drawn from the fables of ancient

Greece, and Rome *, and not from the events or atchievements of the times; and farther, that in their form they were exact copies of the ancient drama; these accumulated proofs amount to a near demonstration, that the Italian Opera is but the revival of the old Roman tragedy †.

Such being the birth of the modern Opera, no wonder it inherits the weakness of its parent. For we have seen that the Roman tragedy never had its proper effects, considered in a legislative view; having been separated from its important ends before its arrival from Greece.

As therefore it had declined to a mere amusement, when it was first adopted by

* The subjects of the first Operas were Apollo and Daphne, Orpheus and Euridice, Alcestes and Atys; which last, in the title page of the oldest extant edition, is called a musical Tragedy.

† As these circumstances prove that the modern Opera is a revival of the old Roman Tragedy; so we are led from hence, to a probable conjecture concerning the measured recitation of the Roman tragedians, and that it was something of the nature of modern recitative.

Rome ; and as we have seen, that in proportion as the Roman manners grew more dissolute ; tragedy sunk still lower in its character, till at length it became no more than a kind of mere substratum, or groundwork on which the actors displayed their abilities, in singing and gesticulation : it was altogether natural, that it should rise again in the same unnerved and effeminate form.

From these causes, therefore, we may trace all the feature of the modern Opera, however unnatural and distorted they may appear. The poem, the music, and the performance, as they now exist in union, are the manifest effects of this spurious origin.

First, That the subject of the poem should even on its first appearance, be drawn from times, and countries, little interesting, and gods, and wonders, and celestial machinery introduced, which neither the poet, nor his audience believed in, could only be the effect of a blind principle of imitation, tending to mere amusement.

The established separation of the poet's from

the musician's art, was productive of parallel effects ; for the poet, ambitious only of shining in his particular sphere, became generally more intent on imagery than pathos ; or else, instead of being principal, he became subservient to the composer's views ; from whence arose a motley kind of poem (calculated only for a display of the musician's art) which degenerated by degrees into a mere *Pastificio*.

Secondly, The same causes account for all the absurdities of the music :—The recitative, a perpetual musical accompaniment in the declamatory parts, is a practice so much at variance with modern manners, that it extorted the following censure from a candid critic :
 “ I beg pardon of the inventors of the musical tragedy, a kind of poem as ridiculous as it is new. If there be any thing in the world that is at variance with tragic actors, it is song. The Opera is the grotesque of poetry, and so much the more intolerable, as it pretends to pass for a regular work*.”

* Dacier Rem. sur Aristote, p. 85.

Now if, along with Dacier, we regard the Opera as a modern invention, this circumstance of the perpetual musical accompaniment is indeed unaccountable; but if we regard it as a mere imitation, or continuance of the old Roman tragedy, and trace it upwards to its true fountain, the Greek drama; and again, follow this to its original source, the savage song-feast; we there see how naturally these extremes unite; and discern the rude melody and song of the barbarous Greek tribes, gradually melted into the refinements of the modern Opera.

Again, as the separation of the poet's from the musician's art produced an improper poetry; so the separation of the musician's from the poet's character, was productive of improper and unaffecting music: for the composer, in his turn, only intent on shining, commonly wanders into unmeaning division, and adopts either a delicate and a refined, or a merely popular music, to the neglect of true and musical expression. Hence too the *da capo* had its natural origin: a practice

which tends only to tire and disgust the hearer, if he comes with an intent of being affected by the tragic action, or with any other view, than that of listening to a song *.

Thirdly, with regard to the performance of the Opera. The theatrical representation is of a piece with the poetry and music; for having been regarded from its first rise, more as an affair of astonishing shew, than affecting resemblance; it is gaudy, flaunting, and unnatural.

The singers, like the poet and musician, being considered merely as objects of amusement; no wonder if their ambition seldom

* The *Da Capo*, which is so striking an absurdity in the more modern Operas, was not used in those of older date. Even Colonna, who lived about the middle of the sixteenth century, employed it not, as appears by one of his Operas performed at the academy in Bologna, A. D. 1688. But in an Opera of old Scarlatti (intituled *La Teodora*) composed in 1693. the *Da Capo* is found, though not in all his songs. After that period, the use of it seems to have become general: for in an Opera of Gasparini (intituled, *Il Tartato nella China*, composed in 1715) the *Da Capo* is found in every song.

reacheth higher than to the display of an artificial execution. As a consequence of these principles, the castrati were introduced into all sorts of characters, in spite of nature and probability; and still continue to represent heroes and statesmen, warriors and women. The flourish'd close or cadence arose naturally from the same sources; from a total neglect of the subject and expression, and an attention to the mere circumstance of execution only.

The frequent encore or demand of the repeated performance of particular songs, was the natural effect of the same causes. No audience demands the repetition of a pathetic speech in tragedy, though performed in the finest manner; because their attention is turned on the subject of a drama: thus if the audience were warmed by the subject of an opera, and took part in the main action of the poem, the encore instead of being desirable, would generally disgust; but the whole being considered as a mere musical entertainment, and the tragic action commonly forgot, the artificial performance of a song,

became naturally a chief object of admiration, and the repetition of it, a chief object of request.

Thus the whole farrago of the modern Opera, seems resolved into its clear, and evident principles: and hence the subject, the music, the action, the dress, the execution, decorations and machinery, are such a glaring compound of trifling and absurd improbabilities, that the tragic influence is overlaid, and lost; nor is it possible for any impartial and rational spectator to take part in the dramatic action, or be moved by the ill-feigned distress.

Let not the writer be thought to derogate from the ability, or merit of all the poets, musicians, and singers, who devote their labours to the Opera. He knows there are exceptions in either of these departments*. Neither let him be supposed to censure the Opera, as an entertainment unworthy all attention, considered as a mere amusement:

* Some of Metastasio's and Quinault's Operas are fine tragedies in three acts.

on the contrary, whoever is inclined to hear a succession of symphonies and songs, set off with all the decorations that can dazzle the eye, and all the refinement of execution that can enchant the ear, let him attend the Opera, and he will find his taste highly gratified.

But this inquiry aims at a far more important purpose ; its intention is to point out the union, the powers, and primary ends of poetry and music ; and when the modern Opera is viewed in this light, the writer presumes, its defects are too conspicuous to admit a vindication.

It is said, indeed, that the weakness and impropriety of this entertainment is chiefly found in foreign countries, where the Italian poetry and music, are not native ; but that in Italy it's power and influence are considerable. This the sensible Rousseau affirms in his dissertation on the French and Italian music.

But particular and well attested facts are stubborn things, and will not bend to general affirmations ; and of this fact, the concurrent testimony of all observant travellers assures

us; that in the Italian theatre the seats of of the chief hearers resemble so many separate apartments, where the nobility sit retired, conversing on indifferent subjects, and regardless of the progress of the drama, till some celebrated singer comes upon the stage, and then only ensues a burst of rapture, of bravos, encores, and applause.

The passion therefore, thus expressed on this occasion, is evidently the effect, not of a true feeling of the subject or tragic action, which is entirely disregarded, but (as in the later periods of ancient Rome) of an extravagant admiration of the singer's ability and art.

CHAP. VI.

ON THE ORATORIO *.

The Oratorio is a dramatic representation of some story taken from the sacred scriptures, or the records of the church accompanied with music. It's origin is attributed to the barbarous period of the Croisades; when companies of pilgrims returning from Jerusalem formed themselves into choirs, and sung the praises and atchievements of saints and martyrs †.

Thus it is said to have arisen, and been established in France. But how it could assume the form of dramatic representation accompanied with music, is hard to say, without supposing it, (like the Opera) to have been the effect of an imitation. On this principle we may trace it to a probable origin.

* From Dr. Brown.

† Menetrier des represent. en musique,

It is well known, that the pagan shews were often exhibited in the temples, or at the tombs of deceased heroes. It is no less certain that the early christians adopted the practice, with a due change of objects, either from a mere imitation of the pagan custom, or with a view to the conversion of idolators. Nothing therefore can be more natural, than that the musical accompaniment should remain, though the objects were changed.

Of this mode of piety we have a clear instance in a discourse of Augustine, who condemned the practice; where speaking of Cyprian's tomb, he says, "Not many years ago, the petulance of the dancers had invaded this sacred place, where the martyr's body is laid: all night long prophane songs were sung, and were accompanied with theatrical gesticulations *."

Now supposing this practice to have still subsisted in some remote, or obscure part of Asia or Greece, it might naturally be adopted

* August serm. in nat. divi Cypriani.

by companies of devout pilgrims, in their peregrinations to the holy land : and thus the sacred musical drama would be naturally produced.

In Italy the origin of the Oratorio is said to have been more recent, and clearly the effect of an imitation. We are told that the famous Philip du Nery, a native of Florence, and founder of the congregation of the priests of the oratory in the year 1540, observing the strong passion of the Roman people for musical representations, invented the sacred drama, with a view to their improvement in piety. Hence it is said to have received the name of Oratorio, which it still wears.

The Opera already established at Venice and Rome, was his model ; he had little more to do than to change the objects from pagan to christian : and thus from Italy it spread into other parts of Europe *.

The capital impropriety and defect of this entertainment, while it wears the dramatic

* Bourdelot, *hist. de la musique*, tom. 1. p. 256.

form, is the perpetual recitative, or musical accompaniment in the interlocutory parts, similar to that of the Opera. This is a circumstance so repugnant to modern manners, and therefore so far out of nature, that no audience can be much affected by the representation, or take part in an action so improbably feigned. The necessary effect of this glaring improbability is a general inattention to the subject, and a regard centered chiefly on the music and execution.

Of this species of poem the Italians have some fine ones, written by Metastasio. They cannot, perhaps, be ranked in the first class, either for sublimity or pathos. But elegance of style, simplicity of plan and conduct, animated by a noble spirit of devotion, prevails throughout these compositions. The music of the Oratorio in Italy too much resembles that of the Opera: simplicity, majesty, and devout expression, are sacrificed to the composer's vanity, or ill directed art.

The performance of this sacred drama in Italy, is said to be attended with many of the

same circumstances of impropriety with that of the Opera, from which it had its origin; all tending to render it rather a subject of mere amusement, than of piety and virtue. Add to this, that being performed in the churches, it may be questioned, whether the drama be dignified, or the temple prophaned, by so inadequate a representation.

In France, I do not find the Oratorio is now in use. Its first rude form produced comedy and tragedy in that kingdom; but the parent seems to have died at their birth *.

In England this sacred drama is in some respects well, in others, ill-conducted: next to the perpetual musical accompaniment, the leading impropriety hath arisen from an entire separation of the poet's and musician's office. Even when the poet remains principal, this separation tends to bad effects; but to compleat the evil, the musician's character hath here in many instances assumed the pre-

* Boileau's art. poet.

cedence ; and the poet became subservient to him as his director.

How this came to pass may be easily explained. This kind of poem being unknown in England when Handel arrived ; and that great musician being the first who introduced the Oratorio, it became a matter of necessity, that he should employ some writer in his service.

Now this being a degradation to which men of genius would not easily submit, he was forced to apply to versifiers, instead of poets. Thus the poem was the effect either of hire or favour, when it ought to have been the voluntary emanation of genius. Hence most of the poems he composed to, are such, as would have sunk, and disgraced any other music than his own.

But although his exalted genius bore itself up against this weight of dulness ; yet such a leading defect could not fail to have essential effects on the musician's art. For although no man ever possessed greater powers of musical expression ; yet when the writer

gave him sometimes little, and sometimes nothing, to express, the main foundation of his art failed him. He was in the situation of a great painter, who should be destined to give life by colours, to a dead, and unmeaning design *.

Nay, even where any degree of poetical expression happened to give play to his expressive powers; yet still, the general composition being unconnected, weak, and unaffecting, there could be neither contrast nor succession of pathetic songs and choirs; which when properly united in one great subject,

* The Messiah is an exception to this general remark: though that grand musical entertainment, is called an Oratorio, yet it is not dramatic; but properly a collection of hymns, or anthems, drawn from the sacred scripture; in strict propriety, therefore it falls under another class of composition.—The Oratorio of Samson is properly dramatic; but the poem is so much changed in the attempt towards accommodating it to music, that it can hardly be regarded as the work of Milton.—L'allegro, and Il penseroso, are two elegant poems, and finely set to music by Handel; but being merely descriptive, and in no degree pathetic, they cannot be ranked among the higher forms of poetry, nor could they give play to his highest powers of expression.

heighten each other, by a continued progression, like the successive scenes of a well planned tragedy.

Had Handel's airs and choirs been composed in this connected manner, and the probability of the representation, in other respects preserved, their effect had been proportionable. At present, being often disjoined and deprived of that connexion which ought to arise from the poet's art, they lose all the force which an accumulation of passion would have produced. They stand single, while in a well connected poem, the effect of every succeeding song or choir, would be heightened by the power of the preceding.

But while we pay all due regard to the memory of this great musician, and acknowledge, nay maintain, that his compositions often arise to the highest pitch of sublimity and pathos; critical justice demands some farther remarks on this subject for the sake of future artists.

As a necessary consequence therefore, of the separation of the poet's and musician's

province, and of his too great attention to the latter ; his music is sometimes improperly conducted, even where it is not influenced by the defects of the poem. From this separation, in which he only complied with the established practice of the times, the following incidental defects naturally arose.

First, Too much musical division upon single syllables, to the neglect of the sense, and meaning of the song. Secondly, A partial imitation of incidental words, instead of a proper expression of the ruling sentiments ; even when such words and sentiments happen to be contrary to each other. Thirdly, Solo songs often too much lengthened, without the intervention of the choir, to inspirit, and sustain them ; especially the *da capo* is almost in every instance of bad effect, as it renders the first and capital part of the song insipid, by an unmeaning repetition. Fourthly, Choirs sometimes too much lengthened, without the intervention of single songs or duets, for the necessary repose of the ear, which is apt to be fatigued and disgusted by such a

long, continued, and forcible expression. Fifthly, Choirs sometimes, though seldom, calculated more for the display of the composer's art, in the construction of fugues and canons, than for a natural expression of the subject. Sixthly, The choir in many instances, (and the single songs in some) not sudden enough in its intervention; being generally prepared by a correspondent symphony of instrumental music, which creates expectation and presentiment, destroys surprize, and thus lessens the impression and the effect. Instances might be produced of all these defects in the composition of this great master; but they arose not so much from himself, as from the period in which he lived. Therefore the writer chuseth to cast them into shades, referring them to the observation and regard of musical professors, rather than seem to fix a mark of disrespect on any particular composition of a man, whose exalted genius he reveres. And upon the whole, his airs, duets, and choirs, as they surpass every thing yet produced in gran-

deur and expression ; so they will ever be the richest fountain of imitation or adoption, and, even singly taken, will justly command the regard and admiration of all succeeding ages.

The performance of the Oratorio, in England under its present defective state, in some respects may be censured ; in others is to be approved. The exhibition of the choir, and accompanying band, is not only decent, but grand and striking : a becoming gravity attends it, both among the performers and the audience. The airs and choirs are often sung with a decorum, not unsuitable to the dignity of the occasion.

On the other hand, there are defects which naturally arise from the separation of the performer's from the poet's and musician's art. The singers are not always so animated in their manner, as to create a belief in the audience (whenever a true poetic and musical expression are united) that they feel the sentiments they express.

If a grand simplicity of performance were still more studied, it would give an additional

lustre to their talents. Above all the flourished close or cadence, is below the dignity of the sacred drama, and absolutely destructive of all true musical expression.

C H A P. VII.

ON CHURCH MUSIC, AND ITS RELATION
TO THAT OF THE OPERA IN ITALY *.

With respect to the sacred poetry, that hath ever been used in the christian church, it is various in different countries. It appears that in Italy, it hath been an allowed custom from the earliest ages, to permit the admission of hymns and motets, as a part of divine service.

This practice in course of time, produced wild, and incoherent compositions : for the poetic character being separated from the musical, the composers, little skilled in the art of poetry, and yet considering themselves as principals, have often formed their motets of sentiments and passions inconsistent with each other †.

* From Dr. Brown.

† For an instance of this kind, take the following which is one of Cavissimi's most celebrated motets, " Peccavi

Another separation here, too, ensued; I mean the total separation of sense from sound; for these motets are generally composed in the Latin tongue, and therefore unintelligible to the greatest part of those who hear them.

As to the church-music of Italy, and its once appendant provinces, it hath assumed a variety of shapes, and in different times hath undergone great changes. In the second century, it appears that the pagan melody was adopted, and allowed under certain restrictions of modesty and decorum *. It was afterwards established at Constantinople by Constantine, then at Alexandria. This establishment was found to have bad effects, through the effeminate genius of the music then in vogue, and was therefore banished from the church of Alexandria. No wonder, if it was infected with the genius of the pagan music of the times, which we find to have been dissolute and enervate.

Domine, et miserere mei; te deligit anima mea, te semper quæsit cor meum; ergo, mi Jesu, mi creator, mi salvator, dimitte culpas, parce peccatis meis, &c."

* Just. Mart. quæst. 107,

From the general prevalence of this debauched taste, Augustine was tempted to banish music from the church. But Ambrose reformed the office of the church of Milan; and established a melody austere in the extreme. This was improved by Gregory; whose melody succeeded, and was established in the following century; and now the devastations of the barbarians coming on, this plain song naturally lay hid unchanged in the christian church, during the succeeding ages of ignorance and cruelty.

On the faint revival of arts in the eleventh century, the appearance of Guido, gave a new genius to the music of the Roman church. For according to the natural tendency of his invention of the art of counterpoint, Gassendi tells us, that all the world now ran mad after an artificial variety of parts.

About four hundred years after Guido, the debauched art once more passed over into Italy from Greece: certain Greeks who escaped from the taking of Constantinople, brought a refined, and enervated species of music to

Rome: where meeting with a congenial effeminacy, under the gay, and dissolute pontificate of the princes of the house of Medici, it ran into such an extreme of indecorum, that pope Pius the IVth, formed a resolution to expel it from the church.

Palæstrini had the art and address to divert this impending storm; by composing some pieces of such a majestic gravity, as convinced the pope, that music, thus truly sacred, might be made subservient to the noblest purposes. This severity of composition still remains in the pope's chapel; where, ever since the reform, last mentioned, even musical instruments are not admitted, for fear of creating new abuses.

But the common genius of their modern church music, or motets, is altogether different: it is infected with the same puerility of stile with their Opera-airs; an unbounded compass, extravagant divisions on single syllables, a play upon particular words, to the neglect of the general tenor of the song, from its general character.

How can it be otherwise? When the musicians (and these seldom interested in the subject, or acquainted with the language of their sacred poetry) generally compose both for the Opera and the church.

Some noble exceptions, however, may be found to this general remark; of these Carissimi is one; but the most eminent instance is in Benedetto Marcello, a noble Venetian, many of whose psalms, if we consider their expression, either as sublime, tender, graceful, or joyous, clearly excel the vocal compositions of all his countrymen in variety, simplicity and truth *.

With respect to the performance of their church-music in Italy, it hath naturally too much followed the genius of the art itself. They have no established choirs of priests: the castrati are the chief singers in the church: in Rome these performers go round the city in bands, as they are accidentally hired; and

* It must be observed that Marcello's compositions are not set to the Latin translation, but to an Italian paraphrase of the psalms.

bring no great credit to the sacred music, either by their characters or personal appearance.

The truth is ; church-music in Italy, like that of the Opera, is considered more as a matter of amusement than devotion. Hence the decorations, and musical exhibitions of their churches in the time of carnival, approach towards those of the theatre at an Opera : and the general attention is so far from being turned on sacred subjects, that it is chiefly exercised in debates and quarrels, about the excellence and superiority of the performing Castrati.

In France the sacred poetry of their motets or hymns, is, in its general turn, much superior to that of Italy : for in France it is most commonly selected and borrowed from the sacred writings. This insures to it a considerable degree of propriety, dignity and force. How this came to pass, we may learn from an authority no less than that of the great Colbert ; who in his political testament, acknowledges this among other obli-

gations which the church of France hath owed to their intercourse with the protestants, that it hath given them a more general and unlimited acquaintance with the holy scriptures.

Their sacred music, though not possessed of that grace which the best Italian may truly boast, yet may be justly regarded as the best that France hath produced ; because it is set to a much better musical language than their own. For the Latin tongue hath a variety of accents and measure, which adapts itself happily to musical expression ; whereas the French language is hoarse, ill-accented, or of ambiguous accent, void of harmony and variety, and incurably discordant : but still the composition of their motets in the Latin tongue, is attended with the same absurd consequence as in Italy, that the people in general do not understand them.

In one respect, however, their sacred music hath not departed from its proper character so far as the modern Italian, I mean, in its gravity of style ; and this, it seems probable,

hath been owing in part to the established choirs in France, which are composed of regular ecclesiastics, and therefore not so easily seduced to adapt a light and flaunting species of music, as the wandering bands of Italian Castrati. Another concomitant cause of this reserved and sober music may probably have been the mixture of the protestant party in France: for these (according to the genius of every new reformed sect) adapted a grave and simple melody; they were therefore a salutary check upon the established church, tending to the prevention of open and scandalous abuses.

Lastly, with regard to the article of performance, the French have greatly the advantage in part of propriety and decorum; for, as we have observed, their choirs are composed of an established priesthood, who attend to this peculiar profession, whose characters are of higher consideration than those of the Italian bands; and whose learning, as well as religion and manners, naturally lead them to a more reverent, and devout execution of their sacred office.

In England the state of things is in some respects better, and in some respects worse than in France. Our sacred poetry, sung in the cathedrals, is transcribed strictly from the holy scriptures, and most commonly from the book of psalms; except only the *te deum*, which is one of the most ancient and approved hymns of the church. This restriction, by which no hymns of new invention are admitted, as a part of divine service, we owe to the grand reformation. This opened to us the fountain of the sacred writings, which had been before locked up, as in Italy.

From the same cause, our anthems are likewise given in our own tongue; which though not so various as the Latin, is yet generally round and sonorous, clearly accented, and capable of being adapted to a variety of musical expression.

But while we justly admire the sacred poetry of our cathedral service, must we not lament the state of it in our parochial churches, where the cold, the meagre, the disgusting,

dulness of Sternhold and his companions, hath quenched all the poetic fire, and devout majesty of the royal psalmist.

The character of our cathedral music is of a middle kind ; not of the first rank in the great quality of expression ; nor yet so improper or absurd as to deserve a general reprobation. Too studious a regard to fugues, and an artificial counter-point appears in the old, and too airy, and high a turn, to the neglect of a grand simplicity, in the new : two extremes which tend equally, though from opposite causes, to destroy musical expression. Yet there are passages in Purcel's anthems, which may fairly stand in competition with those of any composer of whatever country. There are others who may justly claim a considerable share of praise ; Handel stands eminent in his greatness and sublimity of style.

Our parochial music in general, is solemn and devout, much better calculated for the performance of a whole congregation, than if it were more broken and elaborate. In country-churches, wherever a more artificial

kind hath been imprudently attempted; confusion and dissonance have been the general consequence.

The performance of our cathedral music is defective; we have no grand established choirs of priests, as in France; whose dignity of character might in a proper degree, maintain that of the divine service. This duty is chiefly left to a band of lay-singers, whose rank and education are not of weight to preserve their profession from contempt.

The performance of our parochial psalms, though in villages, it be often as mean, and meagre as the words that are sung; yet in great towns, where a good organ is skilfully, and devoutly employed by a sensible organist, the union of this instrument with the voices of a well instructed congregation, forms one of the grandest scenes of unaffected piety that human nature can afford.

The reverse of this appears, when a company of illiterate people form themselves into a choir, distinct from the congregation. Here devotion is lost between the impotent vanity

of those who sing, and the ignorant wonder of those who listen.

The anthem, with respect to its subject, neither needs nor admits improvement; being drawn from the sacred scripture *. A proper selection of words for music, is indeed a work of importance here; and though in many instances this be well made, yet it were to be wished, that some superior judgement would oversee, and sometimes (negatively at least) direct the composer for the prevention of improprieties.

A parallel remark will extend itself almost to the whole book of psalms, as they are versified by Sternhold for the use of parochial

* Although it be a prudent reserve in the church of England, to admit no other poetry than the sacred, into divine service; yet still, for the high purpose of domestic or private devotion and practice, the composition of hymns would be a noble addition to the poetry and music of a rational society of Christians. Here the poet would have room for a display of that genius, which the prudence of the established church hath prevented, in the wise regulation of her public service. Of this kind, may be justly regarded that fine ode of Pope, entitled, *The dying Christian to his Soul*.

churches. There are few stanzas which do not present expressions to excite the ridicule of some part of every congregation. This version might well be abolished, as it exposeth one of the noblest parts of divine service to contempt; especially as there is another version already privileged, which though not excellent, is however not intolerable.

The parochial music seems to need no reform: its simplicity and solemnity, suit well its general destination, and it is of power, when properly performed, to raise affections of the noblest nature. It were to be wished that the cathedral music were always composed with a proportioned sobriety and reserve. Here, as we have observed, the whole is apt to degenerate too much into an affair of art. A great and pathetic simplicity of style, kept ever in subserviency to the sacred poetry, ought to be aimed at, as the truest, and the only praise.

The same devout simplicity of manner may be attained in the performance, and ought to be studied by the organist and choir: their

ambition should lie in a natural and dignified execution, not in a curious display of art.

The maxim of Augustine was excellent, and deserves the serious attention, both of those who perform, and of those who hear :
 “ I always think myself blameable, when I am drawn to attend more to the finger than to what is sung.”

But an additional circumstance seems necessary, as a means of bringing back church-music to its original dignity and use : we have seen in the course of this dissertation, how the separations follow each other in the decline of the poetic and musical arts. And for the sake of truth, we must here observe, that in the performance of cathedral music, a separation hath long taken place, fatal to its true utility.

The higher ranks of the people do not think themselves concerned in the performance. It were devoutly to be wished, that the musical education were so general, as to enable the clergy of whatever rank, to join the choir in the celebration of their creator,

in all its appointed forms : the laity would be naturally led to follow so powerful an example.

There is reason to believe, that this separation, was in part, occasioned by the introduction of an artificial music, which became too difficult in the execution for any but professed musicians : here then we find an additional motive, for bringing down the cathedral music from its present complex and artificial style, to that of simplicity and easy execution.

C H A P. VIII.

ON THE MINOR MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS *.

The common song or canzonette hath sunk from the original dignity which it maintained in ancient Greece, from two evident causes. First, the separation of music and poetry from their important ends, and from each other, naturally prevented the modern poets and musicians, from considering this species as being much worthy of their attention.

Secondly, the nobler application of the song being thus relinquished and lost; no wonder that men of high station and moral dignity, disclaimed the practice of it, even where they had ability, as being an object unworthy of their regard. Hence it hath come to pass, that this species is hardly supposed to touch on any subject, religious, political, or

* See Dr. Brown,

moral, unless it be in jest *. And thus the reigning topics of the song are generally love and wine.

The French and English have adopted both these subjects : the *chansons a boire* of the former, and the drinking catches of the latter, are proofs of their jollity rather than taste : yet they clearly display the different characters of the two nations. A parallel remark might be made on their love songs, with this exception, however, that in a song of this kind, Purcel hath left us one of the finest and best varied pieces of musical expression, that ever was composed. And in justice to the present times, it must be farther observed, that in England, this species is now, in a good degree, rescued from its former indelicacy.

The Italians and Scots have chiefly turned the song on the subject of love. With respect to the poetry, the Italian canzonettes are more elegantly written than the Scotch,

* There are some exceptions to this general observation, but they take place chiefly among the vulgar ; among whom the ballad-song commonly retains its moral and political application.

though with less nature and passion. In the music of the Italian canzonettes there is little variety. They soon disgust by their sameness of expression; the Scotch airs are, perhaps, the truest model of artless and pathetic musical expression, that can be found in the whole compass of the art.

Some of them are said to have been the composition of David Rizzio, who is supposed to have ingrafted the Italian regularity and elegance of song, on the original wild and pathetic manner of the Scots. This tradition carries the appearance of truth: for the Scotch airs are of two different kinds, easily distinguishable from each other: the one regular, and subject to the rules of counter-point: the other wild, and desultory, and such as do not easily receive the accompaniment of a bass.

The first of these may seem to have been the composition, or reform of Rizzio, but in force of expression and Pathos, the latter generally excell them: a circumstance which proves how little the rules of modern coun-

ter-point have to do with the powers of music.

The common song or conzonette may perhaps be judged an object too inconsiderable for any serious proposal of a reform. But the writer will not be ashamed to follow the example of the greatest authors among the ancient Greeks, in recommending the early practice of a proper domestic music, as tending powerfully to soothe the discordant passions, to influence the taste, and fix the morals of youth.

If we reflect how apt the youthful ear is to catch musical impressions, and how open the heart is to every impression so forcibly conveyed, it cannot be regarded as a matter of indifference (among those who understand the force of early habits) whether these first impressions be properly or improperly directed. It may seem a paradox, though perhaps a certain truth, that the future and leading colour of the passions, in both senses, hath often been determined by a song. Poets and musicians therefore would do themselves the truest honour,

if they would religiously abstain from lending the attractive colours of their respective arts to the embellishment of licentiousness and vice *.

The writer would not subject himself to such an imputation of ignorance, as to suggest the possibility of renewing the old Grecian practice, when men of the first rank and dignity disdained not to grace the feast with songs, religious, political and moral; with the celebration of gods, heroes, and virtues; at the very mention of this obsolete practice, he sees ridicule pouring in from every quarter. 'Tis enough to hope from the present fashionable world, that they will abstain from songs of an opposite nature.

As the practicable utility of the common song or canzonette seems to lie chiefly among the younger ranks; an easy and familiar simplicity of style and manner seems peculiarly its proper character. To this ought

* This doctrine is recommended to the strict observance of all superintendants of public diversions, whether in theatres, concert-rooms, or gardens for musical entertainment.

to be added (where the subject will admit) a certain festivity and brilliancy of taste ; that the most attractive colours of the art may be thrown on virtue ; and that thereby benevolence, generosity, and greatness of soul, may habitually mix themselves with domestic and social amusement.

It is judged not improper, to add here, an explanation of a peculiar denomination adapted to certain performances in the musical world ; and known by the term of *passiccio*, which is a selection, or rather an injudicious series of songs, thrown together without connection or design, and hitched into the vamped up subject of an Opera, by some wretched transformer of other men's productions, at the imperious command of the singers, in order not to shew the charms of nature that should obviously arise from the subject, but to display whatever favourite airs or difficulties in execution they think themselves eminently possessed of. To elevate and surprize, as Bayes says, being their chief object.

C H A P. IX.

ON THE EXCELLENCE OF THE MUSICAL
ART *.

It has been the opinion of many philosophers who reflect an honour on that title, that the human voice derives its quality of sounding most grateful to our ears; because it holds the greatest conformity with, and is the most analogous to the varying movement of the human spirits. When the compositions intended to accompany it, are expressed according to the perfection of art, it then, no doubt, deserves a precedence, especially, if devoted to sing forth the praise, of that all gracious, all powerful, and beneficent Being, from whose inexhaustible treasures all created harmony is derived.

The musical art, therefore, from this divine appointment and application, may indeed, claim a pre-eminence above all the

* This, and the following chapters, are extract d from different writers.

other mathematical sciences, as being immediately employed in the most noble and most elevated office, that either men or angels can perform.

Musick, indeed, if considered even in its civil use, is not inferior to any of the rest for the excellence of its power, or the art of its composition ; whether we make it an object of our contemplation in its theoretic or mathematic part, which examines the proportions, ratios, and effects of sounds with all their most nice and curious combinations : or whether we scrutinize it in its practical part which designs, contrives, and disposes those sounds into so many wonderful and amazing varieties, that charm the ear, enrapture the heart, and sublime the mental faculties.

Or thirdly, whether we enquire into its active or mechanic part which is in a parental manner generative, and productive of those sounds, either by the excellent modulation of the voice, or through an exquisite dexterity of the finger upon some instrument congenially responsive to its impulse ; and thro' that

energy exhibits them a welcome feast to our hearing and intellects, whereon such powerful impressions have been made, as to produce by the means of our sympathizing spirits those astonishing effects, which history has recorded, and frequent experience vouches for. It may now be safely asserted that any one of these three departments of music considered in itself, is a most excellent art or science.

There are many different kinds of vocal music, instituted for the solace, and entertainment of polished society, viz. madrigal, dramatic or recitative music, as in Operas, canzonettes, villanellas, ballads, airs of all sorts, or whatever else poetry hath furnished for musical composition.

Notwithstanding the prescriptive arrogance of celebrated musical professors, that persons untutored in the art of music, are not qualified to judge of the respective merits of its several compositions, we dare assert, that an ear, duly organized for the just admission of musical sounds, may by a little attention be enabled to judge, whether a musical compo-

sition be executed according to the rules of perfect art; which mean no more than the genuine dictates of nature.

The principal care of him who composes music to words ought to be, that his notes justly express the meaning and spirit of them. If the words are serious and grave, the music must be of that stamp; if sprightly, agreeable and light, the music must be made to proceed in a similar strain, as well as in accompanying the various passions of love, anguish, and sorrow, which are aptly rendered by chromatic notes; while on the contrary, anger, courage, revenge, require movements more strenuous and stirring.

Whatever is harsh, bitter, cruel, may be expressed with a discord, which nevertheless should be brought off according to the rules of composition. High, above, heaven, ascend, as also their opposites, low, deep, down, hell, descend, may be expressed by the example of the hand, which points upwards when we speak of the one, and downwards when we mention the other; to do otherwise would prove ridiculous.

The musical composer should also have a respect to the pointing of his words; and never employ any remarkable pause or rest, until the words come to a period or full point. In the middle of a word, let him observe never to place any rest how short soever; for by a crotchet or quaver-rest, a sigh or a sob is sufficiently imitated.

Finally, he is never to apply several notes, nor, indeed, any long note to a short syllable, nor *vice versa* to a long one a short note. Let him not set many notes to any one syllable (notwithstanding that in former times it hath been a favourite fashion;) but let his music be such that the words may be clearly, and obviously understood, which will ever be the happy effect, when composers do not stray from the modesty of nature, into the faulty pursuit of novel graces to misadorn her.

Having sketched the ingredients of correct musical composition, consisting in such a diversity of long and short notes, each requiring its due measure; the next obvious transition is to delineate in what manner, it is consen-

taneously felt by an audience, and that is by keeping time: to effect which, a constant motion of the hand is made use of; or of the feet, if the hand be otherwise employed; and if that too be engaged, of the head, the actuated imagination directing the movement of each, or of all.

However, the hand being the part of the body that is most generally moved, to it particularly relate our directions here for keeping time. The motion of the hand is down, and up, successively divided. Every down, and up is called a measure or time; and thereby the length of a semi-breve is measured, which is called in consequence the time-note or measure-note.

But as many readers unrudimented in the art of music may reply, "You have said that a semi-breve is the length of a time, and a time the length of a semi-breve, but we are still ignorant of what that length is."—To which objection, let this be a satisfactory answer (for all those who have none to guide their hand at the first measuring of notes)—

“ Pronounce these words, [one, two, three, four] in an equal length, as you would leisurely read them; then fancy these four words to be crotchets, the quantity or length of a semi-breve; and consequently of a time or measure; in which let these two words [one, two] be pronounced with the hand down; and [three, four] with the hand up.

All beginners will be enabled in the continuation of this motion, to measure and compute all their other notes. Some teachers advise young people to have recourse for the measure of crotchets to the motion of a lively pulse; or for that of quavers to the little minutes of a steady going watch, in order to compute by such means the length of their other notes; but the most easy and practicable of all is the method above delivered.

CHAP. X.

AN HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE CULTIVATION OF MUSIC THROUGH THE MORE POLISHED NATIONS *.

Method requires, that in this chapter, we set off by giving a just definition of this art; wherefore by music nothing more is understood, than a succession of sounds in themselves agreeable and properly expressed, which alone, or differently combined, in changing from low to high, or from slow to quick movements, afford delight and pleasure; consequently music consists of sounds; and the disposing of these sounds either alone, or combined in a pleasing succession, gives birth to the art, and effectuates the end of moving the human passions with agreeable sensations, which prove more or less so, not only from the degree of the artist's perfection, but also

* From Antonini, Antonioti, with several other French, Flemish, and German authors.

from the different bodily constitution, and mental disposition of the hearers.

The principal division of music is into melody and harmony. Now every tone, air or song, formed by a progression of different sounds, but following alone one after the other, or by two or more singing the same sound, is called melody: which may be divided into natural and artificial; the natural is deprived of every ornament, and not under the direction of rules, it being often practised by people ignorant of music: but the artificial, on the contrary, is improved and adorned by the harmonic art, to which it is made a companion, proceeding together by fixed rules.

Harmony, is a product of the progression, of two, or three, or more, different or dissonant sounds, joined together and artificially combined, yet, distinctly perceived by the sensation. The exactness of definition requires, that we say, a progression of different and dissonant sounds combined together; because a simple combination of sound, without progression, cannot be called a compleat har-

mony, being no more than a beginning of harmony, which signifies nothing; in like manner, as a simple word is not a discourse, or an oration, but only a part thereof.

We assign over to philosophers by profession, to explain the nature of sound, in what manner it is produced and propagated: as also what bodies are most fit to produce it; as well as into how many species it may be divided, with the properties determinable to each; but in this work, let it suffice, to say, that musical sounds rendered either by the human voice, or proper instruments, must not only be sweet, but equal in all the degrees of acuteness or gravity; and consequently prove pleasing in themselves; it being evident that a bad, unequal, and ill-disposed voice, like a bad fiddle, cannot afford harmony, which is the chief end and design of the musical art.

Music boasts of no more than eight original sounds; but they, indeed, are transposable to more acute, or more grave, still retaining the same number and order: and though the intervals may be infinitely divid-

ed, so as to comprehend all possible sounds ; yet the octave of every division will have a similar sound, either grave or acute, and by octaves may be multiplied as far as shall seem pleasing to the artist. The process of the eight original sounds, is from the grave to the acute, by two different intervals, and *vice versa*, from the acute to the grave.

Singing and music may be asserted, without straining a point, or any offence to truth, to be born with man ; nay, to be interwoven with every fibre, and in consequence to be congenial to his nature. Their principal business is to cheer the mind, and to relieve it, not only from the irksomeness of idleness, the gloom of care, and the fatigue of domestic employments ; but also to relieve it from the power and tyranny of our impetuous passions, as well as from many other evils, to which humanity is liable.

From the peculiar propensity or genius of individuals of different nations, there arose in the world, an almost infinite variety of tastes and opinions ; wherefore music and

singing were differently studied and cultivated pursuant to varying dispositions.

The Turks present us with a striking proof on this head. Their music is entirely different from ours. The inhabitants of Morocco, Fez, and other parts of Africa, have again a different kind, which to us, appears to be very rough and horrid, but nevertheless proves very pleasing to those nations, their ears being accustomed to it.

Nay, among the various realms of Europe, different manners of singing are to be found. The Scotch, Sicilians, Polanders, and the French, as well as the inhabitants of other climates, have a certain musical mode, peculiar to the prevailing taste of their country, and the idioms they speak; which effects must undoubtedly be derived, from a difference in the respective atmospheres they live under. Moreover in the provinces of one kingdom there often reigns a great variety of tastes and opinions: some are more delighted with a grave and pathetic music, while others are entertained with what is brisk and lively.

Like all other arts, music hath undergone various vicissitudes from its progressive states of beginning, improving, attaining to perfection, and declining afterwards. But to confess the truth, we have only an imperfect and scanty knowledge of the improvements and various gradations of this delightful art.

Tubal, the sixth descendant from Adam, as we are informed by Sacred History, was the inventor of wind instruments, whence may be justly inferred, that they being contrived for an imitation of the human voice, singing must have arrived at some degree of perfection before his time.

We learn also from the same history, that in Judea, in the time of king David, a great number of singers, and performers upon harps, as well as on other instruments were employed in the service of God; that therein were introduced psalms and hymns, and that at those performances the king himself assisted.

Yet no other inference can hence be drawn than that music existed in those times, and even was held in great estimation and honour:

because no mention is made when or how it was learned, or how far the art had proceeded. All we are assured of is, that the Jewish lyre was mounted with a considerable number of strings, that David was the best artist in his time, and as such was employed for curing the phrenzy of Saul his predecessor.

From the time of David all that can be known, and not very clearly, or free from confusion, is that music had a new epocha in Greece, where it began by singing; and that the Greek poets recited their own compositions with a peculiar manner of expression, elevating or lowering the voice, as the subject required by the help of the lyre, an instrument furnished with three strings in some provinces, and in others with four, which were so disposed, as to proceed from the grave to the acute, after the manner of a scale, and were sounded by the touch of the fingers, as the present guitar or lute are.

Hence it appears, that the vocal performances of this early age could be no more than simple and plain recitative, after the

manner of the orator C. Gracchus at Rome, who according to the testimony of Cicero *, employed in speaking to the public, not the sound indeed of a lyre, as mentioned above, but that of a small flute, which a person who stood privately behind him, held; and when he either raised his voice too high, or sunk it too low, he was by this means, that is by the immediate admonition of the tone of this instrument, recalled to the proper pitch. The Grecian orator, Demosthenes, is said to have made use of a similar method.

It being observed, that the voices of mankind in general, are not of an equal pitch as to the grave and the acute, the four strings which had been affixed to the lyre, were consequently found insufficient for the purposes of every voice. For which cogent reason to the former four, were added three other strings, rising gradually higher; by whose means artists were enabled to produce seven different sounds, proceeding from the grave to the acute. The degrees, or intervals, between

* In his *Treatise de Oratore*, book iii. sect. 69.

one found and another, they called tones and semi-tones, which were also divided into greater and lesser.

Music being thus far improved; and nature, for the common good of all, having implanted in each ingenuous breast the noble desire of excelling in great actions, as well as in the useful and politer arts: it is no wonder that the music, which sprang first in Greece from the emphatical recitation of their poets, acquiring afterwards by degrees, a greater energy of pronounciation, was improved into a species of singing, and at last into melody, should diffuse itself in process of time from province to province, but in a different manner, according to the genius, and turns of the inhabitants in each. Hence there arose a necessity of increasing continually the number of the strings of the lyre: besides new instruments of music, both of the stringed and wind-kind, were invented and brought into practice.

The music among the ancients consisted for a long time of nothing more than simple

melody in the nature of recitative, or rather of a melodious pronunciation, utterance or expression, purposely adapted to their musical compositions. Strabo informs us, that the ancient Greek poets rehearsed their verses to the sound of some instrument, and in the manner they judged the most likely to captivate their hearers.

Wherefore by diversifying one after another, their first simple method, and introducing also a certain species of chanting in the manner of a song, and this being cultivated in different manners, according to the varying tastes of the inhabitants, music received daily improvements, sometimes in one province, and sometimes in another, agreeable to the particular disposition of its natives, which diversity of modes was distinguished afterwards, by the name of that country in which it had been principally adopted.

The author who appears to have written the most methodically, and perhaps the best on the subject of music, is Aristoxenus. He distributed the different manners of singing

into fifteen modes, and these again into three different positions, according to the different parts of the human voice. Five, which he placed in the middle, were called principals, five others were called collaterals, but graver; and the remaining five, collaterals, but acuter.

The Doric, the Ionic, the Phrygian, the *Æolic*, and the Lydian, were the principals in the middle. The five collaterals to the acute or high part, were the same, but distinguished by the word hyper, which signifies above, that is the hyper Doric, the hyper Ionic, the hyper Phrygian, and the hyper Lydian.

The word hypo was in a like manner prefixed to the collaterals on the deep or grave part, meaning the inferior, as the hypo Doric, the hypo Ionic, the hypo Phrygian, and the hypo Lydian. In conformity with this opinion of Aristoxenus, we find Casiodorus writing to Boetius, declares, that the artificial music has fifteen modes. Ptolomy accedes to the same opinion. We shall not enter into any disquisition here relative to the diffe-

rent notions on this head entertained by other writers, as a matter but of little importance, and of less instruction.

In allusion to the quotation already made from Strabo, when speaking of the ancient poets, it is proper to remind our readers, that as their poetry consisted of different measures; so their methods of reciting it were different, and one could not be used for the other, without being liable to the charge of impropriety. Their verses had a certain determinate order, and were divided into three classes, one of which was the dithyrambic, the other the tragic, and the third the comic.

A peculiar manner of recitative was assigned to each of these classes; from whence it came to pass, that the chants, or music derived from the nature of the poetical compositions were called modes. If the verses related to any doleful matter, they called it the doleful mode, if to any thing bacchanalian, the bacchic, and so of the rest.

But as the nations were different, and each

had its peculiar manner of reciting and singing, so the modes were consequently denominated from the countries where they were principally employed, as the Doric, the Phrygian, the Lydian, &c.

That mode called the Doric, which partook something both of the Lydian, and the Phrygian, that is both of the soft and harsh, was used by the inhabitants of Doria, in that part of Achaia which is now called the Morea. The Phrygian mode was employed by certain people in Asia Minor, who being by their nature of a fierce and cruel disposition, it was consequently of a severe and furious quality. The Lydian mode was introduced by the Lydians, a people of the greater Asia, whose temper was chearful and gay, and thence it was called the moderate or the modest mode.

In this state and condition did music continue in Greece, till it was reduced by the Romans; by whom too the art was practiced nearly in the same manner, without any remarkable alteration until the fourth century,

when the emperor Constantine the Great embraced the christian religion; in consequence of which imperial conversion, his christian subjects were allowed to have churches publicly opened for their religious devotion.

Saint Ambrose, bishop of Milan, (not long after that time) selected four Greek modes, namely the Doric, the Phrygian, the Lydian, and the Mixo-Lydian, in order to apply them to the hymns and psalms of his church in Milan; from which leading example, music was afterwards gradually introduced into the other churches professing the christian faith. Pope Gregory added four other Greek modes, namely, the hypo Doric, the hypo Phrygian, and the hypo Lydian, and the hypo-mixo Lydian, to the four which Saint Ambrose had chosen.

Those eight tones are called the tones or modes of the church, under the names of *Cantus firmus*, or *planus*, and *cantus Gregorianus*, but not until the eleventh century, can it be said, that music emerged from its child-

hood into a state of youth, under the guidance and care of a benedictine monk, called from Arezzo, the place of his nativity, Guido Aretino, who was the first had any knowledge of harmony which he distinguished from melody.

This judicious reformer not only mended the old great prevailing system derived from the Greeks, but also introduced six monosyllables, in order therewith to learn and practise the art of singing. These monosyllables were, *ut-re-mi, fa-so-la*, which, it is reported, he took from a strophé, or stanza of a Latin hymn, written in honour of St. John Baptist, from which he chose the first and sixth syllable of every verse, as we have marked them :

Ut queant laxis *Re*-sonare fibris

Mi-ra Gestorum *Fa*-muli tuorum,

Sol-ve polluti *la*-bii reatum,

Sancte Johannes.

The ancient manner of writing was also changed by Guido. The method in practice before his time was to employ the letters of the alphabet, by which the several notes of the scale were distinguished; and to write them all upon one line, one after another in length, as mentioned by Boetius. But Guido substituted in their place certain points disposed upon, and between four lines, and afterwards five, whence came the name of counter-point in compositions of music, and prefixed at the beginning of one of the lines, one of the letters, by which all the points upon, and between every line were regulated and ascertained.

But the greatest improvement made by Guido in the musical art, was the introduction of harmony by joining it to melody, and forming therewith different compositions of two, three, and four parts: which parts consisted of different notes, varying in their order one amongst another, yet blended harmoniously together, so as to yield infinite pleasure to an audience.

Guido's harmony was as simple as possible, consisting only of a combination of the first, or principal note, with its third, fifth and octave, which he disposed in the most agreeable and harmonious manner. He adapted this harmony to the chants or the tones employed in the church-service. This great master published a treatise on music, entitled *Micrologus*, with his *introduction*, and also an *antiphonaicum*, for the use of the church, which performances have been honoured with the commendation of illustrious personages, and very eminent authors, such as cardinal Baronius and others.

The several improvements which had been introduced by Guido, spreading themselves gradually from Italy to other christian realms and states of Europe, were adopted by the whole church, and thus the precentors, or masters of the choir, in every particular church, who before had only practiced the chant-choral, called *cantus firmus*, or Gregorian, devoted themselves to become imitators of Guido ; and, pursuing his rules, to become

even composers; every one striving, not only to join parts in an harmonical way, to the *cantus firmus*, or Gregorian chant, but even to devise and invent new tones or specimens of melody: insomuch that by the obviousness and facility of solfaing, even melody made great advances, and became greatly varied from that of the Greek, and Roman taste.

The melody, notwithstanding, of his time, being composed of notes so long, that one of them served sometimes for a whole period, the new improvements, daily hit off, required the breaking of those long notes into shorter times, and measures; for so it fell out, that the original notes and points introduced by Guido, were progressively found to be insufficient for the purpose of writing and expressing the many strains of a newer invention.

That defect was remedied by John de Muris, an advocate of the parliament of Paris, and a great lover of music. He lived in the fourteenth century, invented certain new characters or notes, by the means of which

the different lengths, or tones of sounds, might be commodiously expressed, which have been found very essential towards melody's farther improvement.

Musick, assisted by the inventions of John de Muris, continued to make daily advances in harmony, as well as in melody. For divers instruments, the best adapted to musick, were thenceforward more commonly used than they had been, to wit, harpsichords, viols, violins, tenors, bass violins, &c. and as these derived from the voice the sweetest and most pathetic melody, so on the other hand, the voices acquired from them, as being the most ready, and easy in the execution, the diminutions of the different notes, in airs, as well as in other quick and lively movements, inso-much that the vocal performers and instrumental striving to out do each other, they have by degrees arrived at that perfection, which at present, we have the pleasure of enjoying.

The good effects produced by this emulation appear more eminently in instrumental

performances. For skill and ability in instrumental music depends, not only upon genius, but an inclination, assisted by unwearied application, and intense practice; whereas to excel in vocal music requires, besides a natural genius for music, not only practice and application, but, what is very uncommon, an admirable voice: which we apprehend to be the reason, why in our times we hear so many more excellent instrumental than vocal performers; which event, however, is recompensed to us by nature herself; since, generally speaking, a moderate finger pleaseth always more, than the best hand upon any artificial instrument: the voice being the best of all, because it is natural, and that which all others should study to imitate.

Harmony became a considerable gainer by the improvements made in melody. It was observed, that in the diminution of notes, sounds were found out, which contributed much to the pleasing of the ear; and that many of those diminutions might be performed upon a simple ground, not only in their

proper situation, but also out of it ; and even reversed.

By means of these added sounds or notes, which, among musicians, go by the name of discords, prepared and resolved, musical compositions became as they are at this day, the subject of study and labour ; there being composed canons, fugues, and imitations, single and double, of different subjects united together, which constitute the most agreeable study, but they require great application, and assiduous practice.

C H A P. XI.

ON THE SUPERIORITY OF THE HUMAN
VOICE OVER ALL INSTRUMENTS *.

The harmonic art having from the middle of the last century to the present time arrived, as appears, at its *ne plus ultra* ; one may fairly assert, that the music, uttered by a good and duly qualified voice, is infinitely superior to all that can be produced by any instrument whatsoever ; because the best of instruments can only yield sounds, but a voice can unite its musical sounds to discourse ; and when it is properly adapted so, both together acquiring an extraordinary power, it becomes, in a manner, despotic over the human passions, and can excite most astonishing sensations, equal to those related in history.

But this resistless exertion falls very short, when music is not judiciously composed, and

* From the same sources, whence the preceding chapter is derived.

properly applied to the expression and sense of the words. For notwithstanding, that the music may be composed by an excellent artist, yet, if it be but indifferently adapted to the words, it is to be considered only as simple instrumental music, fit for entertaining the ear ; but not for assailing the heart of man, or affecting his passions. Because the very excellence and superiority of vocal music consists in giving a new energy to the speech, which cannot be effectuated without the excellence of the harmonic art, being suitably joined to the expression of the words ; and this association (if we chuse to distinguish the art exactly) is what only deserves to be called music. In this sense, therefore, it may be defined a perfect emphatical expression, produced by an accurate combination of words and sounds.

Wherefore to possess this masterly knowledge of music, it is necessary, that the proficient have not only a thorough acquaintance with all the rules of combinations, and progressions harmonic, but with all the different

impressions which may be communicated to sensation by the various motions, combinations, and progressions, either by degrees or by skips. In order to be able to distinguish the properest airs which are to be applied to the different sentiments, as pathetic, brisk or languid, in their proper time, flow, or quick; for example, a skip of the fifth, high in quick time, is more proper for some lively expressions, than skipping to a fourth low, which is the consonant sound at the octave low; which skip may better serve for pathetic and doleful expressions in flow time; and, because the vocal music is performed by different voices, as sopranos, contraltos, tenors and basses, every one of which has a different propriety, and consequently are not of a little advantage, when it is in the power of the composer to make choice of the most proper voice for expressing the sense of the words he writes upon.

The voice of the sopranos, being of the acute kind, is more proper for quick movements, which likewise are the most fitting

for merry and agreeable expressions. The voice of the contraltos being less acute, and having a sweet tone, may be employed in the pathetic and amorous stile, and in other slow movements.

The tenor partaking of the particularities of all the other voices, may serve in all gay, brisk, grave, and resolute movements, and especially in simple narratives which are, recited under the term *andante*, by the Italians called *arie parlanti*; which means a manner of speaking.

The bass being a more grave voice, is not proper for quick movements, not in the very *adagio*-pathetic; but is in the middle of those two extremes, as *largo*, *andante*, *risoluto*, and *staccato*. The properest motions of melody for basses are skips also by their gradual divisions, or diminutions of notes.

To the tenor-voice all motions are proper. To the contraltos, the *soffenuito* and firm notes are fitted, as also some few skips, but not too much distant either in acuteness or gravity; on the contrary, the *soffenuito*

and firm notes are not proper for the soprano voice ; but the moving and diminished notes are better adapted. These may serve for general rules in distributing the music to the voices, which perhaps upon some occasions may be liable to slight exceptions ; but all such a skilful composer will set to rights.

There remains a last advice to be given to musical composers, which is, that they should acquire some knowledge, both in the oratorial and poetic arts, which will the better enable them to appreciate the properest sounds whether simple or combined, for their being, as it were congenially moulded to the various expressions, such as narratives, declamations, interrogations, lamentations, exclamations, &c.

The musical professor should also work himself into the same passions with which he would have his compositions actuate an audience. For what is not felt by an artist, can never be communicated by him.

————— Si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi. ————— HOR.

C H A P. XII.

AN-ACCOUNT OF THE OPERA AND
AUDIENCES IN ITALY.

“ The king’s theatre in Naples, upon the first view, is, perhaps, almost as striking an object, as any a man sees in his travels.—The amazing extent of the stage, with the prodigious circumference of the boxes, and height of the cieling, produce a marvellous effect on the mind, for a few moments ; but, the instant the Opera opens, a spectator laments this fine *coup d’oeil*. He immediately perceives this structure does not gratify the ear, how much soever it may the eye. The voices are drown’d in this immensity of space, and even the orchestra itself, though a numerous band, lies under a disadvantage. It is true, some of the first fingers may be heard ; yet, upon the whole, it must be admitted, the house is better contrived to see, than to hear an Opera.

• From Mr. Sharpe’s letters.

“ There are some who contend, that the singers might be very well heard, if the audience were more silent ; but it is so much the fashion at Naples, and, indeed, through all Italy, to consider the Opera as a place of rendezvous and visiting, that they do not seem in the least to attend to the music, but laugh and talk through the whole performance without any restraint ; and it may be imagined, that an assembly of so many hundreds conversing together so loudly, must entirely cover the voices of the singers.

“ Notwithstanding the amazing noisiness of the audience, during the whole performance of the Opera, the moment the dances begin, there is an universal dead silence, which continues as long as the dances do. Witty people, therefore, never fail to tell me, the Neapolitans go to SEE, not to HEAR an opera. A stranger, who has a little compassion in his breast, feels for the poor singers, who are treated with so much indifference and contempt.

“ One would suppose, from the regard shewn

to the dances, that a superior excellence was to be expected in this art ; but Naples does not, at present, afford any very capital performers, nor do the dances, which have been brought on the stage this season, do much honour to their taste. They are, in general, exceedingly tedious, some lasting thirty-five minutes, and others twenty-five, with incidents and characters too vulgar and buffoonish ; but it must be confessed, that their scenery is extremely fine, and their dresses are new and rich ; the music is well adapted, but above all the stage is so large and noble, as to set off the performance, to an inexpressible advantage."

The Neapolitan quality, rarely dine or sup with one another, and many of them hardly ever visit, but at the Opera.—It is customary for gentlemen to run about from box to box between the acts, and even in the midst of the performance ; but the ladies, after they are seated, never quit the box for the whole evening. It is the fashion to make appointments for such and such nights. A lady re-

ceives visitors in her box one night, and they remain with her the whole Opera; another night she returns the visit in the same manner. In the intervals of the acts, principally betwixt the first and second, the proprietor of the box regales his company with iced fruits, and sweet-meats.

Besides the indulgence of a loud conversation, they sometimes form themselves into card-parties.—There is a notion in England, that the Italians frequently sup in their boxes, and that by drawing the shutters in front, they may be in private, but there are no such shutters, and the practice of supping is so rare, that I have never seen it.

The two burletta opera-houses are not in much request, except when they happen to procure some favourite composition; the grand Opera being the only object of the Neapolitans, which, indeed, has such pre-eminent encouragement, that the others are forbidden, by authority, to bring any dancers on their stage without a special licence, lest they should divert the attention of the public

from the king's theatre.—Their dresses, their scenery, and their actors, are much more despicable than one could possibly imagine.

We shall enter into no description of the play house at Naples, which, by the meanness of its situation and structure, its wretched scenes and dresses, its miserable decorations, and, in general, more miserable actors, joined to the dingy shabbiness of the audience, and offensive contemptibility of the pieces that are most commonly exhibited there, reflect disgrace on a supposed polite nation.

To the remarks of Mr. Sharpe on the theatres of Naples, let us add Dr. Smollet's (these gentlemen have been our most recent observers in Italy) on those of Florence.—
 “ There is a tolerable Opera in Florence for the entertainment of the best company, tho' they do not seem very attentive to the music. Italy is certainly the native country of this art, and yet I do not find the people in general, either more musically inclined, or better provided with ears, than their neighbours.—
 Here is also a wretched troop of comedians,

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A particular description of the theatre at Naples, a matter that so frequently occurs in the conversation of our transalpine travellers, and which is by most people looked upon, for its capacious area and loftiness of structure, to be the most remarkable in Europe, cannot prove unentertaining to our readers. They will be able to draw a comparison with our own in London.

and determine which deserves the preference. And for this further information we are also obliged to Mr. Sharpe.

The pit is very ample, and in one circumstance differs from all the other Italian opera theatres, of which the Neapolitan may be considered as a grand specimen. The singularity is, that its seats, amounting to the number of between five and six hundred, have each annexed to it arms, resembling a large elbow chair; besides, this pit has an interval all through the middle, and a circuit all round it, under the boxes, both of which I judge, in a crowded house, will hold betwixt one and two hundred people standing. The seat of each chair lifts up like the lid of a box, and has a lock to fasten it.

There are in Naples gentlemen enough to hire by the year the first four rows next to the orchestra, who take the key of the chair home with them, when the opera is finished, lifting up the seat and leaving it locked. By this contrivance they are always sure of

the same place, at whatever hour they please to go to the Opera; nor do they disturb the audience though it be in the middle of a scene, as the intervals betwixt the rows are wide enough to admit a lusty man to walk to his chair without obliging any body to rise.

The usual payment for the season, or the whole year, in which they give four Operas, is twenty ducats, about three pounds fifteen shillings; the people who do not hire their seats by the year, pay three carlines, about fifteen pence halfpenny, for their place in the pit.

The boxes are not disposed like ours, into front and side boxes, but into six ranges, one above another, all round the house. The three lower ranges are hired, either for the season or the whole year, by the ladies of distinction. The price of a box for the whole year is two hundred and forty ducats, equal to forty-six or forty-seven pounds sterling. The price of a season is proportioned to the length of a season. The other three ranges

are let by the night, but no man or woman can go into the boxes, paying only for one person, as in France and England.

Strangers who come to Naples for a short time, if they are either people of figure or well recommended, are invited into the boxes of the nobility; if they are not, they hire a box for the night, and seldom fail to find one in the second or third range; for, should it happen that they are all taken up for the season by persons of quality, yet some of these persons of quality are not so delicate, but that they order the undertaker of the Opera to let out their boxes when they do not go themselves, and often stay at home purposely on *gala* nights, and at the opening of a new Opera, when sometimes they are hired for the night at an exorbitant price, such as fifteen ducats, and sometimes much more.

Each of the six ranges, consisting of thirty boxes, would make one hundred and eighty in all, if the king's box in the front did not occupy the place of four of them. It is situ-

ated on the same level with the second range, and is both of the extent and height of two boxes, possessing, as I have intimated, the space of four boxes.

The situation of his majesty in front has a good effect ; and if our royal family approved of it, the imitation would grace our London theatres. The boxes are large enough to hold twelve people standing ; but their largeness is owing to their depth, for they are so narrow, that only three ladies can sit in front, and the three next behind them must stand up, if they would see all the stage and the actors ; so that, if more than six are present, all those behind see little or nothing. This arises from a partition which runs betwixt each of the boxes, and prevents the side-view. Were these partitions removed, the house would be much cooler in warm weather, and two or three hundred people more would partake of the diversion than there do at present. The ladies would be more conspicuous, and consequently the theatre appear more gaudy than now, that they are shut up

in such dark closets; but I should suppose that this alteration will never take place, because if the boxes, which now hold six only with convenience, were made commodious for ten or fifteen, two families would join for one box, and consequently not above half of the boxes would be hired. What I have here said relates only to the side boxes, because every one in the front boxes must have a view of the stage.

It is the custom in Italy to light the stage only, which renders their spectacles frightfully dark and melancholly. They pretend it is an advantage to the performers and the stage; and so far is true, that if there must be only such a small quantity of light in the house, it is much better to place it on the stage than on any other part; but on *gala* nights, when it is illuminated in every part, the Italians seem as much pleased with it as a stranger; so that I imagine it is to save the expence of so many wax-tapers that the custom is continued.

These tapers are almost as big as small

torches, and are disposed very unartfully against the sides of the boxes, as high as the fourth range, so that the people in the boxes extinguish several of them. When his majesty is present, they do not take that liberty; but if, instead of these tapers, there were a sufficiency of lustres hanging over the pit, the purpose would be answered without the least annoyance.

Dark as the boxes are, they would be still darker, if those who sit in them did not, at their own expence, put up a couple of candles, without which it would be impossible to read the Opera; yet there are some so frugal as not to light up their boxes; though the instances are rare. It is not the fashion here, nor, to the best of my remembrance, in any part of Italy, to take a small wax light to the house, and therefore hardly any man has eyes good enough to make use of a book in the pit.

The ladies in the boxes and pit of the Opera-house in London make a much more brilliant appearance than they would in the

dark boxes, in Naples; where, on common nights, it is not possible to distinguish a feature in the opposite boxes. Indeed, the London theatres, are much better contrived to render the spectators an ornament to the house; for even the galleries, in my opinion, exhibit a prospect, which enlivens, if it do not beautify the scene; but were they ever so awkward, they are necessary in England, where so many hundreds, of the middle rank of people, resort every evening to the play-house.

Were an audience to consist of the fine people only, Palladio's theatre at Vicenza, would consequently be the proper model; where the plan is half an oval cut lengthways, surrounded with boxes ranged in a colonade, and where all the seats rise above one another, so artfully, as to make the spectators themselves a most pleasing part of the spectacle.

The men, in the pit (of the Neapolitan opera house) do not, upon the whole, make a good figure: for, though there are many officers, who are well dressed, yet they, and the gentlemen, are much the smaller portion of the

company there. There is a vulgar set of men, who frequent the pit, and another set still more vulgar, who pay nothing for their entrance; but as the upper servants of the ladies, who have boxes; the upper servants of ambassadors; and sometimes, for a small fee to the door-keepers, those servants introduce their friends.

It is not to be omitted, amongst the objections to the immense largeness of the house and stage, that, in windy weather, you would imagine yourself in the streets, the wind blows so hard both in the pit and boxes; and this seldom happens without causing colds and fevers.

The performers are not paid so liberally at Naples as at London; but, considering the different expence of living in the two places, the proportion is not very short amongst the capital singers; as may be gathered from the salary of La Gabrieli, who received, for singing the last year, eighteen hundred sequins (nine hundred pounds sterling) and has contracted for the same sum the ensuing year.

Aprile, the first man, has three thousand

five hundred ducats. Genaro, the first dancer amongst the men, has two thousand ducats; and La Morelli, the first woman dancer, one thousand five hundred ducats. A ducat is worth about three shillings and ten pence.

The *impressario* or manager, is bound to very bad terms, so that his profits are inconsiderable, and sometimes he is a loser. The theatre being a part of the palace, the king reserves for himself, his officers of state and train, fifteen boxes; nor does the king, or rather the regency, pay the manager one farthing; whereas the late king used to present him, annually, four thousand ducats.

The *junto*, deputed by his majesty, to supervise the opera, reserve to themselves the right of nominating singers and dancers, which obliges the manager, sometimes, to pay them an exorbitant price. Another disadvantage he lies under, is the frequent delay of payment for the boxes; and a manager must not take the liberty to compel persons of quality to pay their just debts.

In Turin, the management of the Opera is on a much better footing, because there is a society of gentlemen, answerable for every expence whatsoever, viz. the salaries of the actors and the orchestra, the purchase of the scenery, the dresses, &c. so that the performers are sure of their pay, though the opera should not succeed.

I must not omit a foolish singularity, in relation to the women dancers at Naples, that in consequence of an order from court, in the late king's time, they all wear black drawers. I presume, it was from some conceit on the subject of modesty ; but it appears very odd and ridiculous.

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To the remarks of Mr. Sharpe on the theatres of Naples, let us add Dr. Smollet's (these gentlemen having been our most recent observers in Italy) on those of Florence.—
 “There is a tolerable Opera in Florence for the entertainment of the best company, tho' they do not seem very attentive to the music. Italy is certainly the native country of this art, and yet I do not find the people in general, either more musically inclined, or better provided with ears, than their neighbours.—
 Here is also a wretched troop of comedians,

for the bourgeois and lower sort of people."

It may now seem puzzling to the untraveled English reader, how to account for such discouraging inattention to musical excellence, in the very nation where the lyric muse has been revived, and cultivated to the highest perfection; and that has, besides, produced so great a number of the most eminent proficients in every department. The seeming paradox is thus to be solved, very few of the Italian gentlemen or ladies make music a part of education; wherefore, their pleasure at Operas is chiefly auricular, and perhaps hath been one of the chief causes of the practice of surprizing an Italian audience with musical difficulties, that being the sure way of gaining their applause. We must on this occasion revert to Mr. Sharpe for a satisfactory answer, why Italy furnishes all Europe with musicians? He says, "That the infinite quantity of music exhibited in their churches and chapels, provides bread, though the wages be small, for a prodigious number of performers; and as trade is despi-

cable, and laborious employments are held in detestation, parents are induced to bring up their children to this profession, which they can do at a small expence, for there are several hundred youths brought up to music in their conservatorios, or charitable foundations: now, where there are so many hundreds in continual practice, it is not strange that emulation and genius should every now and then produce an excellent performer; who, if he be well advised, will certainly set out for England; where talents of every kind are rewarded tenfold above what they are in Naples, except in the single instance of the first class of opera singers, who are paid extravagantly."

C H A P. XIII.

THE INTRODUCTION AND PROGRESS OF
ITALIAN OPERAS IN ENGLAND.

When the Italian Opera began first to steal into England, which was not long after the erecting of the Hay-market Theatre, in the year 1706, it appeared in as rude a disguise, and as unlike itself as possible, in a lame, hobbling translation, into our own language, with false quantities, or metre out of measure, to its original notes, sung by our own unskilful voices, with graces misapplied to almost every sentiment, and with action lifeless and unmeaning through every character.

The first Italian performer that made any distinguished figure in it, was Valentini, a truly sensible singer, at that time, but of a throat too weak, to sustain those melodious warblings, for which the fairer sex have since idolized his successors. However, this defect was so well supplied by his action,

that his hearers bore with the absurdity of his singing his first part of Turnus in Camilla, all in Italian, while every other character was sung and recited to him in English.

However, the inclination of our people of quality for foreign Operas having reached the ears of Italy, the credit of their taste drew over from thence, without any more particular invitation, one of their capital singers, the famous-signor Cavaliero Nicolini; after whose arrival, the first Opera exhibited was Pyrrhus.

Subscriptions, at that time, were not extended, as of late, to the whole season, but were limited to the first six days only of a new Opera*. The chief performers in Pyrrhus, were Nicolini, Valentini, and Mrs. Tofts; and for the inferior parts, the best that were to be then found.

Whatever praises may have been given to the most famous voices that have been heard since Nicolini; upon the whole, I cannot but come into the opinion that still prevails.

* See Cibber's life.

among several persons of condition, who are able to give a reason for their liking, that no singer, since his time, has so justly, and gracefully acquitted himself, in whatever character he appeared, as Nicolini.

At most, the difference between him, and the greatest favourite of the ladies, Farinelli, amounted but to this, that he might sometimes more exquisitely surprize us; but Nicolini (by pleasing the eye, as well as the ear) filled us with a more various and rational delight. Whether in this excellence he has since had any competitor, let us endeavour to judge from what the critical censor of Great Britain says of him in the Tatler, viz.

“ Nicolini sets off the character he bears in an Opera, by his action, as much as he does the words of it by his voice; every limb and figure contributes to the part he acts, in-somuch, that a deaf man might go along with him in the sense of it. There is scarce a beautiful posture, in an old statue, which he does not plant himself in, as the different circumstances of the story give occasion for it.

He performs the most ordinary action, in a manner suitable to the greatness of his character, and shews the prince even in the giving of a letter, or dispatching of a message, &c."

His voice, at the first time of being among us (for he made us a second visit when it was impaired) had all that strong clear sweetness of tone, so lately admired in Senesino; a blind man could scarcely have distinguished them; but in volubility of throat, the former had much the superiority. This so excellent performer's agreement, was for eight hundred guineas for the year, which is but an eighth part more than half the sum, that has since been given, to several that could never totally surpass him.

The consequence of which is, that the losses by Operas for several seasons, to the end of the year 1738, were so great, that those gentlemen of quality, who last undertook the direction of them, found it ridiculous any longer to entertain the public at so extravagant an expence, while no one particular person thought himself obliged by it.

Mrs. Tofts, who took her first grounds of music here in her own native country, before the Italian taste had so highly prevailed, was then not an adept in it: yet whatever defect the fashionably skilful might find in her manner, she had, in the general sense of her spectators, charms that few of the most learned fingers ever arrive at. The beauty of her fine proportioned figure, and exquisitely silver toned voice, with that peculiar rapid sweetness of her throat, were perfections not to be imitated by art or labour.

Valentini, though he was every way inferior to Nicolini; yet as he had the advantage of giving us our first impressions of a good Opera singer, had still his admirers, and was of great service in being so skilful a second to his superior. Three such excellent performers at once, in the same kind of entertainment, England, till this time, had never seen.

Senesino long flourished in universal esteem here; and the two celebrated Opera Heroines of Italy, Faustina and Cuzzoni, were so

extravagantly admired in this country, as to cause most violent parties for the ascertaining which of the two deserved a preference.

Since the above mentioned famous vocal performers, the singer who has been the most universally admired by all ranks of spectators was the celebrated Manzoli, in the year 1764. From what he declared at his exhibiting on the first night, an opportunity presents itself of making a parallel of the behaviour of the Italian and English audiences, much to the advantage and honour of the latter.

In the character of Ezio, he was drawn in a triumphal car on the stage. The emotion in his features was visible to most of the spectators. When he descended from the car on the stage, his feet were observed to totter, on reflecting, no doubt, that he was going to take his trial before a rational, and attentive assembly, where a Nicolini, a Senesino, a Farinelli, had displayed their amazing talents. However the pre-encouraging plaudit of the spectators soon recovered him. He

spoke—it was a general silence; he sang—it was all rapture and astonishment.

On coming off the stage he declared to those near him that a treatment so polite, and so different from what he had been accustomed to in Italy, threw him into a greater confusion than he had ever known before. He grew upon the audience every act, and continued an object of the public admiration, through the whole season, nay was applauded with as much rapturous emotion on the last night as on the first.

A singer, like Guarducci, may be thought more adapted, for the gentle pathetic, insinuating tenderness, or elegiac strains; but such a commanding power, such an epic trumpet of voice as that of Manzoli, to inspire and amaze the human faculties, can be but rarely found, perhaps not twice in a century.

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